Christian Courier

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Bible studies sales drop by half

Multi-church customers choosing ethical issues, prayer

Irene Bom

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. — Which way adult Bible studies? Toward imagining and social support, or toward heavy-duty "meaty" lessons with lots of homework?

The question of direction is front and centre at the education department of CRC Publications. In the next two months the Christian Reformed Church's education wing will take the question to their customers in various cities, including Vancouver, Edmonton, Calgary and Hamilton, Ont., to help chart the direction of the department.

Over the past five years sales of old-style Bible study materials — ones that include a commentary on a Bible passage followed by discussion questions — dropped by half, says Dave Vanderwel, managing editor of the department. Sales of Bible study videos accounted for some of that drop.

Sales in the Christian life category — spanning prayer to family life to ethics — jumped from 23 per cent to 43 per cent in that time period.

And the department's customers are changing: sales to CRC congregations of adult group Bible studies have dropped from over 80 per cent a decade or two ago to 25 per cent now. Reformed, Presbyterian and Anglican churches have picked up the slack.

More personal approach

Promotions co-ordinator Cele Mereness says she expects to hear calls for study materials with a "more personal" approach at the cross-continent meetings.

"People are craving intimacy. They still want to learn about Scripture, but they want to know more how to apply it to their lives," she says.

"Out" in Bible studies is learning facts about a character like Joseph. "In" is "imagining yourself into the Bible story, into how Joseph felt."

The focus of that approach is on personal decision-making, says Mereness. "We hope that this imagining will carry over into decisions when the person feels as lonely as Joseph felt."

"Knowledge is not enough for people today. They need support," adds Mereness "Loneliness is the biggest problem."

But former CRC Publications curriculum editor Robert Meyering says that figures don't necessarily show that younger church members are not willing to work.

"A lot of CRC members are going for intensive Bible study programs with a lot of homework," he says.

Programs such as Bible Study Fellowship "demand a level of commitment, and

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PHOTO: CRC PUBLICATIONS

Groups like this are still meeting, but they're studying different topics.

Groups in mainline churches 'get energetic' about Scriptures

Irene Bom

ST. CATHARINES, Ont. — What started as a cost-cutting decision has ended up fuelling a new interest in Bible study in a local Anglican parish.

Bruce Ellis, head of Good Shepherd Anglican Church, says the decision last fall to buy pew Bibles did more than cut out the need for the pamphlets containing the weekly Bible readings.

"It also put the Bibles in the hands of the people," he says. "It's part of a general turnaround that we're seeing in this parish."

A former board member of Anglican Renewal Ministries of Canada, Ellis says his church's experience is not unusual among more conservative parishes in his denomination.

"More conservative churches are becoming really energetic about Bible studies and about getting back to the basics," he says.

Others getting in

Renewal groups in other mainline denominations have been getting in on the action.

Says John Trueman, president of the Community of Concern in the United Church, "We recognize that part of the difficulties in our denomination have been caused by a liberal view of Scripture."

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Mexican 'rebels' not rebels, say Christians who've been there

John Pater

EDMONTON — The recent violent uprising in southern Mexico is "understandable and justified" say a number of Christians in Alberta who have been to Mexico.

"You can only put up with oppression for so long," says Linda Siebenga of Lacombe, 120 km south of Edmonton. "They were only standing up for what is right and necessary."

Siebenga, along with her husband and two teenaged children, went to Mexico three years ago on a 10-day tour organized by Earthkeeping (Christian Farmers Federation of Alberta). They lived with subsistence farmers about an hour's drive south of Mexico City.

That's many hours away from Chiapas State where the new year's uprising took place. But Siebenga says the people they visited experience much the same oppression and injustice as the people in Chiapas. "You can understand how people will stand up and fight," she says.

On Jan. 1 an armed rebellion was begun by peasant farmers in the southern Mexico state of Chiapas. Calling themselves the Zapatista National Liberation Army, these "rebels," as they are called by the Mexican government, are descendants of the Mayas.

The Mayas are indigenous

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PHOTO:JOHN PATER

Gerald Debbink.

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Thinkbit

"I lost my faith ... I kind of mislaid it. When I went to look for it, it wasn't there."
Murray F. Lees in *The Stone Angel*

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News

Looking for a better life

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peoples who live in southern Mexico, Belize and Guatamala. Leaders of the Zapatistas have said their revolt was timed to coincide with the implementation of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). They believe NAFTA will complete the destruction of their culture begun when Europeans first came to North America. NAFTA, they have said, will result in more and more of their land being taken away to be developed for oil exploration, cattle ranching and lumber.

The Mexican army moved quickly in to quash the revolt. Official government sources say over 100 people died. Church and human rights groups say the death toll is more like 400.

Dreams and hopes

Gerald Debbink of Millet, 50 km south of Edmonton, objects to the Zapatistas being called rebels. "These are no rebels," he says. "They're just like you and me, with their dreams and hopes for a better life for themselves and their children."

Debbink, his wife, Mary-Anna, and their four young children, lived for three and a half years (1989-1992) south of Mexico City. The Debbinks lived, worked and worshipped with farmers in the region. They wanted to find out what life was really like for "the poor" in Latin America.

They found out. They also found out how oppressive the Mexican government is.

Debbink says the government doesn't like it when people start asking questions like "Why are we poor?" and answering that question with "Not because God damned us to be poor, but because of economic and political structures."

Debbink says the trouble really starts when the people agitate for things like safe, clean water and other basic necessities of life.

No democracy

Church and human rights groups have documented thousands of illegal detentions, tortures and killings in Mexico over the last decade. Many of those abuses are aimed at those not on the side of the government. One party has ruled Mexico since 1929, and electoral fraud has been suspected in the last several elections.

Linda Siebenga says she and her family saw enough during their short visit to convince them that Mexico is not a democracy. "It's not a just situation there," she says.

Debbink asserts, "The military is ruthless, and uses whatever force is necessary." He says he himself fears being blacklisted by Mexican authorities because of his "solidarity" work and activity since he's returned to Canada. "You never know what the government will do," he says.

Opposed to improvement

Although Debbink has not been to the area where the New Year's uprising happened, he says there were often exchange visits between Christians there and where he lived. He says for the indigenous peoples there, the revolt comes out of 500 years of living in extreme poverty.

He says anyone who worked to improve the people's life eventually had to go underground. "The government would seek out these leaders."

Debbink is concerned that "human rights abuses will happen now that some of those leaders have come out in the open" to lead the revolt. He adds, though, that the military's suppressing of the uprising doesn't mean the movement for change has died. It may not be in the media anymore, he says, but the work continues.

Debbink believes Canadian Christians need to take a position on what is happening in Mexico. He himself is gathering names and donations for a petition that he hopes to have published in a Mexican newspaper.

"We need to let indigenous people in Mexico know," he asserts, "that there are Canadians who can identify with their struggle and the lifelong injustice they face."

Linda Siebenga says Canadians need to open their eyes to what is happening in Mexico. She says from a Canadian standpoint, "we'd rather see them as rebels." That would justify our seemingly easy acceptance of NAFTA. However, she says, "We're not helping the people there by getting into this agreement."

Banner drops study inserts

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people respond to that," he says.

But he admits that sales of the "Five to One" series the department launched several years ago, in which group members would put in five hours of homework before a one-hour lesson, floundered, perhaps because of marketing problems.

Meyering says the traditional approach to Bible study had its failings, too. That approach "often ran through a list of interpretations of a passage before ending with the Reformed answer, instead of stimulating people to think," he says.

But at the same time some conservative churches have grown "because they gave direction in a time of confusion," he adds.

Renewed spirituality

Mereness says *Space for God*, a book on personal meditation and prayer by Don Postema, is currently the best-selling study guide because "it is just perfect for small groups."

But Wayne Brouwer, chair of CRC Publications board, points to a current "renewed sense of spirituality" as another reason for its success.

Personal devotions and group adult education have always had somewhat of a rough ride in a denomination that is "still living out the tensions" between the pietist emphasis of early Dutch settlers in America and the social emphasis of post-war immigrants, most of whom settled in Canada," says Brouwer.

So-called traditional Bible studies only caught on about 20 to 30 years ago. The real tradition "is for the sermon to be adult education," he notes. "And that's too bad because it narrows a sermon to expository teaching, when it should also include inspiration and motivation."

Changes insert

The recent makeover of *The Banner*, the CRC's denominational magazine, signaled the change in Bible study methods. In January editors ended a two-decade-long tradition of stapling group Bible study inserts into the centrefold of the weekly.

Readership surveys "showed that their use was dropping, and we wanted to free up the space," says associate *Banner* editor Malcolm McBride. He says the new family devotional pullout is "more valuable for our goals."

Study 'mushrooms' among middle-aged Catholics, immigrants

...continued from p.1

The co-ordinator at a United Church youth camp near Kitchener says that with the current enthusiasm for Bible study among youth in his area, "We've got a huge number of kids who probably know their Bibles better than adults," says Bruce Aitken, who uses Precept Ministries inductive Bible studies.

Catholics show up

The Catholic Biblical Centre in Scarborough, Ont., has also seen "kind of a growing interest" in Bible studies. Sister Jocelyn Monette says it's not uncommon for 300 to 500 people to show up for her workshops in the Toronto area.

Those groups include highschoolers and grandmothers, but especially people between 35 and 60 as well as immigrants, she says. "It's like a mushroom thing."

The centre began offering Bible and Hebrew studies in 1974. In a brochure Rev. Matthew Ustrzycki, the auxiliary bishop of Hamilton, Ont., explains the need for the centre. If Catholics are not taught how to interpret the Scriptures, "they may drift into fundamentalist Bible groups that often lack the proper background and tools for interpretation," he is quoted as saying.

Include myths

Monette says her studies differ from evangelical ones because they "do not take the Bible word for word" and include studies of myths and different creation stories.

PHOTO: BEYOND SORROW

Her work can be frustrating, Monette says. "It takes a lot of work to get people growing. And we're not always supported by the leadership, so interest often isn't followed through."

Admits Aitken, "Quite often I feel alone in what I'm doing."

Comment

PRESSREVIEW

Carl D. Tuyl

Our country's social security system is going under construction. Human Resource Minister Lloyd Axworthy announced a far-reaching review of all social security programs. "Tighten the belt" is the motto from sea to shining sea. Debit is given where debit is due.

Traffic lines in Toronto the Good hit bottom lows because the pens of the metermaids froze so that they could not write tickets.

And the city of Langley in British Columbia feels ripped off because it did not get a sufficient share of the $1.5 million the provincial government receives from traffic tickets issued by the RCMP within the city's boundaries.

★ ★ ★

Cigarette smuggling and the underground economy are problems which rob the government of billions of dollars. Finance Minister Paul Martin is in a huddle with his fellow publicans, and there are rumors that even health and dental benefits might become taxable.

Prairie Preston, however, spoke darkly of a tax revolt if taxes are increased in the budget. Fear filled the heart of all parliamentarians.

What is he planning? Refuse to eat on Parliament Hill? Buy hot dogs from the vendors on Spark Street? Sell his bicycle on the black market? Appear in the House dressed in a jogging suit? The country is in suspense about Manning's tax revolt.

★ ★ ★

Way out West, striking longshoremen shut down Vancouver's harbor, while B.C.'s Premier Harcourt was in Germany trying to counter the Greenpeace campaign against B.C.'s forest companies. German "greeners" greeted Premier Harcourt with a typical Prussian pattern of pique.

Said Christoph Thies: "He certainly can't expect any friendliness."

★ ★ ★

Telestat Canada, the company that sends our communication satellites into space is in a bit of Anik panic because Anik 2, a $286-million piece of equipment is on the blink.

Telestat will try to repair the thing, but it will cost more than a week's minimum wages for flipping hamburgers. The tune-up will be more in the $3 million range.

★ ★ ★

This item from the *Vancouver Sun*: "Responding to the news that Queen Elizabeth does not like garlic, the Stinking Rose garlic restaurant in San Francisco has issued a news release announcing that Her Majesty is henceforth banned from the premises."

There is our loser of the week: The Stinking Rose restaurant in San Francisco.

★ ★ ★

And Richard Pantin from St. John's, Nfld., is disappointed because his harp-seal stuffed pies are not selling well in the supermarket. That in spite of the fact that seal meat in Newfoundland, although not a staple diet, is nevertheless consumed to the tune of 225,000 kilograms annually.

Personally I am going to give them a try as soon as they appear on the shelves.

★ ★ ★

There's more bad news from the East. Less than halfway through its five-year construction schedule, the $5-billion Hibernia project is already $450 million over budget. Ah well, what's half a billion.

★ ★ ★

Is there a person with a mind so dead that he or she doesn't stick a finger in the coin return slot after making a call at a pay phone? A deep question that, but I can't remember from which paper I clipped it.

★ ★ ★

Walt Disney is having trouble. Euro Disney, the huge complex outside Paris, is proving to be as popular as a Chinese-type influenza.

It lost $900 million US last year, and now people in the state of Virginia are turning thumbs down on a planned Disney version of American history on a 3,000-acre site in that state.

★ ★ ★

Dutch survivors of Japanese World War II concentration camps have gone to court to demand compensation from Tokyo. The lawsuit seeks about $29,000 Cdn. for each of the 77,000 camp survivors.

★ ★ ★

Sign of the times: *Pravda*, a voice of opposition to President Boris Yeltsin's leadership is suspending publication. It appears that a Greek millionaire was trying to take over the paper that was for decades the mouthpiece of the Communist Party.

Sign at the Coffee Pot Cafe, Wickieup, Arizona: "Service is our motto, not our practice."

★ ★ ★

Stocks soared to record levels as investors bought heavily on the world's exchanges. The U.S. Federal Reserve is already considering anti-inflationary measures.

Next: you scratch my back and I'll buy your airplanes.

★ ★ ★

The U.S. will restructure a $2-billion loan that the Saudis need to buy arms. Saudi Arabia will then buy $6 billion worth of airliners. High finance hocus pocus!

★ ★ ★

Come March 27, the Italians will go to the polls again. They might as well stay there. The country has more elections than my neighbor's dog has fleas.

★ ★ ★

Lillehammer, site of the Olympic winter games, will see its population swell from its usual 23,000 to 138,000.

Canadian peacekeepers in Bosnia (is there an oxymoron in that phrase?) were molested again.

★ ★ ★

The winners are the chaplains who were in Edmonton for the annual conference of the Canadian Association for Pastoral Education. I was privileged to spend time with them.

They are, as one pamphlet says, "the eyes, hands and heart of our Lord." Hats off to them all.

Carl Tuyl is chaplaincy co-ordinator in Canada for the Christian Reformed Church and is a member of the Ontario Multifaith Council on Spiritual and Religious Care.

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Editorial

There's a line running through history

Before I was conceived and born in the low-down lands of the lowlands, there was a man called Johannes de Heer. His name almost sounds profane: "John the Lord," but his life was dedicated to the spread of the gospel.

I heard about him when I was a child, mainly through the hymnbook many Christians used in their homes, which they simply called "Johannes de Heer." In fact, before I knew he was a real flesh and blood man, I thought he was a collection of religious revival songs that made people misty-eyed.

The man was a well-known and beloved evangelist in Holland who delivered radio meditations, organized evangelism conferences and published a weekly called *Het Zoeklicht* (*The Searchlight*). The more staunch Calvinists looked down on him a bit as one of these Arminians who put too much emphasis on the individual making a decision.

Right now I'm looking at an August 16 issue of *Het Zoeklicht* in a collection of 1930 issues that someone lent me. In this issue de Heer writes how his wife shortly before she died had said, "I see a line." De Heer talks about that line, which is the line of God's salvation plan running through history. He elaborates on this line and points out various phases of history, beginning with the creation of this world and culminating in the coming of the new heaven and the new earth.

Against the arbitrary

It's important to see this line, says de Heer, because it enables a person to make more sense of life, to recognize the signs of the times and to accept things which otherwise might seem arbitrary or tragic.

Even though I have some difficulty with de Heer's dispensationalist view of God's plan, I do agree with the broad outlines that he sets out. And I certainly agree with him that it is important for Christians to see a line running through history.

That line is the emerging of the Kingdom of God. Another way of putting it is to say that it is the unfolding of God's purpose with his creation. Christians know that no matter what happens to them and to their world, God is going to achieve his purpose of saving and renewing his creation.

Living in expectation

At home and at the Christian school children learn about that line as they hear the stories of God's involvement with creation. They hear about the crucial (cross-shaped) period of history when Christ died, rose from the grave and assumed his reign in heaven. They are taught that we live in the expectation of the return of Christ. In church these stories and lines are re-enforced, also for adults. They help us orient ourselves in the flow of time.

This is so different from what many people experience outside of the Kingdom. Imagine growing up and thinking that the line of history is my country's independence, the economic upswing everybody hopes for, the day the Buffalo Bills will win the Superbowl, the person I will marry, the revenge I will wreak on my abuser, the job and reputation I will gain, the high I will get from taking drugs. What a miserable line: a little blip on the screen of the universe, a little dash on the scroll of human existence.

People live in expectation and see lines, all right. But most of these lines go nowhere. They give temporary meaning to an otherwise meaningless life. They stir the blood or the emotions for a moment, they increase the flow of adrenalin. But like most picker-uppers, they fail in times of crisis.

White-paint stripes

Christians, on the other hand, need only turn to Scripture to be reminded of the solid and reliable line running from the beginning to the end of time. Or they can read Article 2 of the Christian Reformed Church's contemporary testimony, *Our World Belongs to God*:

> *From the beginning,*
> *through all the crises of our times,*
> *until his kingdom fully comes,*
> *God keeps covenant forever.*
> *Our world belongs to him!*
> *God is King! Let the earth be glad!*
> *Christ is Victor; his rule has begun. Hallelujah!*
> *The Spirit is at work, renewing the creation.*
> *Praise the Lord!*

Do you see the line running through history: God keeping covenant forever and the Spirit at work renewing creation?

That line is like the white-paint stripes on the Trans-Canada Highway running from the Pacific to the Atlantic. You can rely on them. They get you where you need to go because they were painted there by people who were part of a covenant to lead people from the one side of Canada to the other without getting confused by hazardous turns and inclines. Even so the Spirit!

Johannes de Heer and his wife knew about the line. They were, what one might call today, line dancers.

BW

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—provides opportunities for contact and discussion for the Christian community.

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Immorality cannot be outlawed

Those who would accuse the government of promoting the harmful practice of smoking by considering the lowering of taxes on tobacco might be helped by the following excerpt from a speech by Ed Vanderkloet. Vanderkloet, the former executive secretary of the Christian Labour Association of Canada, gave the speech at a CLAC staff meeting in 1992.

"If at a certain moment in time we make laws, must these laws take sin into account? Undoubtedly! When drinking became a public and national problem, we enacted prohibition laws. But these were untenable and, in fact, had an adverse effect in that smuggling of alcohol and gangsterism flourished like never before. It [the prohibition law] was a normative, yet unwise law that did more harm than good."

According to Vanderkloet, even though a law may express God's will for life, it "cannot always be enforced just like that, with the stroke of a legislative pen."

Lowering the tobacco taxes is the appropriate thing to do in the face of increasing lawlessness around the sale of cigarettes.

BW

Across the Globe

David T. Koyzis

A proposal (with glitches) for the future of Canada

The 35th Parliament convened last month with the usual pomp and circumstance. Governor General Ray Hnatyshyn delivered a fairly brief throne speech outlining the proposals of Jean Chretien's Liberal government. The major issues facing the government are, of course, the economy, job creation, the deficit, and (increasingly) the future of Canadian peacekeeping missions in the Balkans and Somalia. But lingering just below the public consciousness is the festering constitutional issue, which will almost certainly resurface before the year is out.

As official Opposition, the Bloc Quebecois intends, at least, to defend the interests of Quebec and, at most, to secure that province's independence. Recently the Bloc announced that it will support the Parti Quebecois in this year's provincial election. If the PQ wins, as is widely expected, then Quebec's status in confederation will once more be in doubt.

After the failure of both Meech Lake and Charlottetown, it may seem like a reckless act of hubris to wake the dormant beast and propose a way to avoid the coming institutional impasse. But I believe it can be done. I would argue, furthermore, that in large measure the interests of Quebec and the West actually coincide and that the two regions could come to terms in such fashion as to keep all Canadians under the same political roof.

Asymmetrical federation

Quebec wants to have more autonomy *vis-a-vis* Ottawa, while the West wants to have a greater voice in the federal government. If we accept the possibility of an asymmetrical federation, that is, that not every province need have the same relationship with Ottawa, then both these demands are quite capable of being satisfied. Say, for example, that Quebec takes over responsibility for a number of policy fields which the other nine provinces prefer to leave to Ottawa. Perhaps Quebec would leave defence, economic, monetary and a few other matters in federal hands but would itself be in charge of most other areas, including immigration, natural resources, education and culture.

Since Quebec would have removed itself to some extent from under federal authority, it would have proportionately less representation and influence in Ottawa. Therefore, when an issue on which Quebec had "opted out" came before the Commons, its MPs would refrain from debate and voting. This would create something of a political vacuum that the West could then step in and fill. Central Canada (i.e. Ontario and Quebec combined) would be less dominant on the federal level, because part of central Canada would have removed itself to a large extent from playing a role in these federal institutions. That would make the West more powerful at the centre, which is what its leaders have long wanted.

Glitches

Unfortunately, Quebec might not accept a diminution of its own influence in Ottawa as a logical concomitant of greater autonomy. In other words, it might still wish to play a dominant role in making policies by which it would not necessarily be bound. This in effect would make the rest of Canada a dependency of Quebec — something which the rest of the country would naturally not accept. But even if Quebec were to acquiesce to its own diminished influence in Ottawa, the West might still object to Quebec being treated differently.

I will not pretend that my modest proposal has no glitches. Working out the specifics might prove difficult, if not impossible. Yet if we can manage to think creatively and to keep from vilifying our political opponents, we might just be able to make it work.

David T. Koyzis teaches political science at Redeemer College, Ancaster, Ont. Not quite a Canadian nationalist, he has been told he looks terrible in a tuque.

Our suffering lies within God's sovereign and gracious rule

It's a risky business to try to explain how God's sovereignty and his goodness can be harmonized and understood. Job's friends tried to do that and failed miserably. I'm not at all persuaded by the advice in "Peter and Marja are In" (Jan. 21) on a subject that has plagued Christians since time immemorial.

To state that Lord's Day 9 and 10 (adversities are sent to us by our heavenly Father) makes God into our foe is in my view quite mistaken. The Slofstras wrote: "When people are suffering they need the Lord to help; they do not need a God to blame for all their misery."

This conclusion and its implications are astounding and, in my view, more in keeping with the increasingly popular habit of speaking of God as if he were a mere human being than with a careful listening to the Scriptures.

Although we cannot fathom the mystery of evil and of Satan's existence in all its depths, the Scriptures are clear in showing that God is omnipotent and that our suffering does not lie outside of his sovereign and gracious rule.

Not always answers

That does not answer all the difficult questions, and perhaps we should admit that there are some questions for which we have no answers. At least we should not answer them in a purely logical fashion. Rather, we should seek the grace by which we are able to say with Job: "I know that my Redeemer lives."

There are many Bible passages that throw a different light on this age-old dilemma than the one provided by the Slofstras. Let me mention just James 1 and conclude with what the psalmist says in Psalm 138:7: "Though I walk in the midst of trouble, you preserve my life."

Harry Antonides
Willowdale, Ont.

Christian schools are not into selling fragments

In response to "Home(school) and school should not compete, say teaching parents" (Jan. 21), I wish to make a few observations.

One homeschooler is quoted as saying: "Other children don't teach each other manners or train each other up in the fear of the Lord. All kids do [in school] is batter each other about and form cliques...." Such statements are not only short-sighted, they are divisive. While Christian schools are not perfect, many positive things are aquired and experienced there.

This week I observed my grandchildren playing school together, no doubt modeling much of what happens in their own school experience. The "pretend school" opened with joyous singing. Many pleasant interactions followed as the children acted out their school day with story time, penmanship, art and gym.

A teacher in an area Christian school told me about a physically challenged child she had in her class. The child was well included in play activities and at the same time protected from endangering himself by his peers.

Deep bonds

My grown children have found that the money invested in their Christian education was well worth it. Aside from the education they got from their school years, they experience many warm relationships with school mates decades after graduation.

I myself attended a Christian high school. At our latest reunion there was still a deep bond and much sharing and concern for one another's lives.

Tuition up

One last thought. As more families withdraw from Christian schools, exercising the Christian education option becomes less viable for the whole Christian school community. Tuition costs are driven up. Running the school becomes more difficult in terms of scheduling and offering program variety.

At the same time, homeschool families like McRae's wish to be able to take advantage of certain of the school's services at a fraction of the cost of the tuition that the school's other families contribute. Are McRae's expectations fair?

What McRae fails to understand is that such selling of fragments of education runs counter to what Christian schools are all about. Choosing a Christian school is not in the first place buying a service. It is rather choosing to participate in an educational community.

There are many agencies, both private and public, that *are* in the business of selling such "pieces of education" as gymnastic programs, sport activities, testing, etc. McRae and other homeschoolers could more appropriately have their needs serviced there.

M.S. Van Egmond
Norval, Ont.

Christians can't be 100 per cent depraved

I appreciate the point in your editorial "North American Christianity stifles softly" (Jan. 14) that the Christian life needs a broader focus than our individual spiritual growth and that we need a Christ-empowered social conscience (spiritual warfare) within our world.

Then in the second editorial you call on your fellow "anti-depressant Calvinarians" to arise. Again I agree with that note of encouragement. But I have difficulty with your one statement: "As a person who proudly considers himself 100 per cent depraved I deeply resemble that remark" (of being a "pharmacological Calvinist").

I find it puzzling that you would proudly consider yourself 100 per cent depraved. Is that really what we are as Reformed Christians?

Born again

I realize that Calvinists endorse the doctrine of total depravity. But to whom does this refer? Consider Question 8 of the *Heidelberg Catechism*: "But are we so corrupt that we are totally unable to do any good and inclined towards all evil?" Answer: "Yes, *unless* (emphasis mine) we are born again by the Spirit of God."

Consider also the *Canons of Dordt* on the teaching of total depravity, which stress that it is the person without the regenerating grace of the Holy Spirit who is a slave to sin. In other words, the Spirit-led Christian cannot be 100 per cent depraved, let alone be proud of it.

As Spirit-led Christians there is a progressive "dying of the old self and the coming to life of the new self" (*Heidelberg Catechism*, Answer 88).

Spirit enables

In that sense the two parts of your editorial are related. Our "identity in Christ" very much affects our focus in life. If we see ourselves as depraved Christians, we will continue to focus on our own spirituality. We will doubt our ability to do things for Christ in this world.

The Bible assures us in Romans 8:9 that we "are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you." Verse 11 says: "And the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you." Take note that these words in Romans 8 follow the words of Romans 7 that we often refer to when we talk about the doctrine of total depravity. As Romans 7:24-25 says: Jesus has rescued us from the wretchedness of our sinful condition!

Henry Steenbergen
Brighton, Ont.

Response:

I heartily agree with your explanation of Romans 7 and 8 and Reformed doctrine. There is no disagreement between us. The doctrine of total depravity always describes the human condition outside of Christ, or, to use the language of Paul, "the sinful nature." Through rebirth we gain a new nature, which becomes the real us. Yet Paul admits to a tension by calling us to live out of the new nature, which we do imperfectly.

My editorial was written tongue-in-cheek. Since Calvinists are often caricatured as being negative, I thought I would play up the idea of being 100 per cent depraved and acting as if I'm proud of it. The play on the words "deeply resent" and "deeply resemble" gets at this double-edged meaning.

Editor

Finances minor reason for homeschooling

We are a homeschooling family and read with interest the articles concerning homeschooling in the Jan. 21 issue.

There is a point, however, that needs to be clarified, "Parents homeschool because Christian education is unaffordable." I would challenge that statement.

My wife ended her part-time business (which easily covered the Christian school tuition costs) to teach our four children at home. We now have other related education costs which average $500.00 per child.

Finances played a minor part in our decision to homeschool. We did not choose an easy path by homeschooling, but it does pay great dividends!

Christian Schools International must begin questioning why families are leaving the institutional Christian school, and not just assume that the reason is finances.

There are many other reasons for this growing homeschool movement. Time is running short, CSI!

Sandy Smids
Sarnia, Ont.

Marian den Boer

Like the Lilies

The gift of encouragement

"We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift... is encouraging, let him encourage" (Rom. 12:6-8).

My husband, Marty, had the squash court booked and was looking forward to a workout when at the last minute his opponent cancelled. Desperate to play, he asked me. For the love of him, I said yes. That's how inexperienced, unco-ordinated me got into a squash court with a seasoned tournament player.

On the court, which looks to me like a prison cell with a high ceiling and no furniture, Marty points out the red boundary lines running along the walls and the black boundary lines on the parquet floor.

He produces a little black ball with a yellow dot on it and explains, "The rules are simple. You stand in your square and serve off the front wall to my square. After that you may hit the ball from and to anywhere but the ball must hit the front wall between the red lines before it hits the floor. I'll warm up the ball."

He whacks the ball at the front wall about 20 times. Wham, thwack, thwack, thwack, thwush. When he's done, the ball is definitely warm. We begin to play.

Warming the air

Every time Marty serves, my racquet swooshes the air, scrapes the wall or hits the floor, but rarely touches the ball. I never seem to know where the ball is heading until it's too late. When I serve, I am lucky if the ball makes it to the front wall, and if it does get to Marty's square, he returns it easily to some place out of my reach.

"You're swinging wrong." Marty shakes his head. I can feel his disgust growing. "Move into the swing."

I warn him to be nice. "Pretend I'm not your wife. Pretend you are young and single and you just met beautiful, gorgeous me." He's nicer after that.

Later in the hour when my arm is so tired it feels like it might fall off, Marty checks the clock. "Time's almost up. We must be having fun," he notes unenthusiastically.

He wonders if I will let him hit the ball around by himself for those last few minutes. "I want to at least work up a sweat," he pleads. I stand in the corner dejected. Thwack, thwush, thwack, thwush..., the ball is warm again.

Re-thinking squash

I slouch off to the women's dressing room where I meet a couple of college students who had been using another court.

"How did it go?" they ask.

"I'm probably the worst player ever."

"You'll get better." I tell them exactly how awful I am. "What color was the dot on your ball?"

"Yellow."

They show me a blue-dot ball. "It's for beginners. There's more bounce; it's easier to hit."

I tried hitting it off the dressing room wall. "You're right. It is easier."

They tell me about how they got started and progressed over the weeks and how I would be seeing improvement in each consecutive game.

After a shower I meet Marty in the hall. I feel unbelievably refreshed and invigorated. I tell him about the college kids and the blue-dot ball.

He had forgotten about beginner balls and how he himself had worked up to the yellow dot from a red. He apologizes.

For a week my left arm aches from fingertips to shoulder and I'm not motivated to return to the squash court. But thanks to the encouragement from those college students, I just might someday soon, without Marty of course. I love him more than that.

Marian den Boer is an associate with Write Impression, communications and public relations. She lives with her husband and five children in Hamilton, Ont.

C.S. Lewis, the human sufferer or the triumphant Christian?

Some alternative thoughts on *Shadowlands*

The following is a letter by Harry Der Nederlanden of St. Catharines to Marian Van Til about her review of Shadowlands *(CC Jan. 21), a film based on C.S. Lewis's relationship with Joy Davidman.*

Harry is a long-time student of literary theory and has done doctoral work in literary criticism. The views he expressed here are insightful and thought-provoking, and instructive for anyone with an interest in Lewis and his writings.

Dear Marian,

Rose and I just read your review of *Shadowlands* and thought we would share our reaction to the movie. No doubt, the fact that just before reading your review we watched a video of the earlier version influenced our opinions to some extent. The earlier [television] film struck us both as good but less concise, less economical and hence as considerably less powerful than Attenborough's.

Our strongest point of disagreement was with your statement that Attenborough undercut Lewis's character by leaving him with his faith in tatters at the end of the film. Is this really true? True, we don't see anything of the man picking up his life as an apologist for the Christian faith afterward so that we don't get a well-rounded story of faith triumphant or of faith achieving understanding.

Another set of images

Attenborough has selected another set of images and themes to structure reflections. This is the passive, suffering aspect of faith: faith as shipwreck of human effort and achievement; the faith of the broken, crushed reed (Pascal).

This structure does involve representing Lewis's earlier, discursive, sometimes rather intellectualistic embodiment of faith as something strenuously cobbled together to provide himself a cozy, complacent home in English society.

Among the Oxford dons writing fantasies for children and lecturing on Christianity to ladies societies may have occasioned some ribbing but would ultimately have been accepted as mere eccentricities. There were enough precedents for both. Lewis spent considerable energy developing logical ladders and rational scaffolding to make his beliefs appear as capstones to human deliberation.

Dying to self

To construct a story of this moment in Lewis's journey that provides the kind of closure that makes his life a paradigm of a life made transparent by human reflection would be to restore the don to his position of mastery. The story is about the need to lose such self-mastery in order to truly love. This is true of love for humans as well as love for God. One comes across this theme in Lewis's study of love in the courtly love tradition, in Spenser and in medieval literature, so he articulated the theme himself; but in his life, in his personal experience he avoided such risks.

If I remember Lewis's own account correctly, this comes from his own interpretation of Joy's impact on his life. He was moved by love from the role of spectator to that of participant (this, incidentally, is a theme as old as English literature itself, for it is prominent in Chaucer, a fact which Lewis himself would have been aware of and delighted in).

Structurally, then, the film is better off without an overly discursive, extended ending which would have detailed how eventually his life as a Christian apologist went on from triumph to triumph. Not only would it have diluted the power and structure of the film, it would have turned it too much into hagiography [writings about the lives of saints], and far too much of what has been published on Lewis falls in this category.

To tell you the truth, Rose and I went to the film not knowing it was about C.S. Lewis. Had I known, I may well have opted to see something else. One can get his or her fill of Lewis adulation. Familiarity breeds... you get the picture. This may well be the reason Lewis's name was suppressed in the advertising: it is associated with a well-established, perhaps complacent, undoubtedly boring Christianity.

From this angle, too, the film's representation of faith in terms of weakness instead of in terms of the imposing fortress of argument and institution would tend to make Lewis more attractive, more profoundly human.

One of Lewis's gifts was to portray Christianity not as a distinct category but as an encounter with the question of being human. By becoming a believer one does nothing more than discover how to become fully human. The film ends with a cataclysm of grief, and then we see two boys, the husband and the son, walking into the landscape of childhood longing and memory (Heimweh).

Continuous childhood

This version exploits the imagery and themes of childhood employed in the Narnia tales much more effectively than the earlier one. In its development of this imagery, too, the ending strikes me as fitting. The good old boys' club of Oxford dons is exposed as such, as immature, as protected from real life as Lewis himself in his comfortable bachelorhood. They are playing boys' games in their schoolish debates.

Only when Lewis is paradoxically reduced to the helplessness of the child he weeps with, and at the same time replays his own childhood grief at the death of his mother, does he really break out of an artificial maturity into a genuine one. I know this opposition between an ideological, intellectual knowledge and an existential, experiential knowledge is a modern cliche, but it does capture a smidgen of truth.

The theme of childhood and of boyhood dreams of a quest for the good ties in with the biblical imagery of the Kingdom with all its inversions of adult, civilized notions of wisdom and success. It helps to highlight the question raised by the title: Which is the land of shadows? Is it that other world of goodness, love, and perfection that we occasionally glimpse or taste in this world? Or is this world with its deadness, phoniness, blindness and imperfection a mere shadow compared with the fullness and richness of the life to come?

This makes for a more chastened, anguished Lewis than we may picture, but the film is, after all, not really the story of Lewis's life as a whole. It is a story of a paradigmatic moment in that life. So I must admit, I prefer Attenborough's version to one which ends in triumph. I wrote this because you might find the contrast in perspective interesting.

Cordially,
Harry

Michelangelo disrobed

ROME, Italy (EP) — After 14 years of work, four art restorers have almost completed the cleaning of Michelangelo's frescoes over the ceilings and walls of the Sistine Chapel. One final project remains for the artists: the removal of some of the 38 drapes, loincloths, and undergarments added to the original work. A papal decree after the artist's death declared that the nudes painted by Michelangelo should be covered up. By using sponges and chemical solvents, the restorers have removed four-and-a-half centuries of dust, grease, and smoke on the paintings in an effort to restore them to their original state.

Mennonite-sponsored mediation program to be included in National Film Board documentary

WINNIPEG, Man. (MCC) — Winnipeg's Mediation Services will be one of the organizations featured in a planned National Film Board (NFB) of Canada documentary about alternatives to the present judicial system.

The NFB plans to include the Mennonite Central Committee-sponsored organization in the documentary, which will feature alternative ways to deal with crime and conflict.

The documentary could take between one to three years to complete.

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Church, Marian Van Til, page editor

Trans World Radio celebrates 40th anniversary of first gospel broadcast

CARY, N.C. (TWR) — On Feb. 22, international religious broadcaster Trans World Radio (TWR) celebrates the 40th anniversary of the airing of its first broadcast. It was in 1954 that TWR founder Dr. Paul E. Freed established the first station in Tangier, Morocco. His vision was to reach the country of Spain with the gospel. Utilizing only a 2,500-watt transmitter, "The Voice of Tangier" went on the air in Spanish and English. By 1956, the station was broadcasting to 40 countries in more than 20 languages. Today, with over six million watts of combined transmitting power, Trans World Radio broadcasts the gospel in 100 languages from nine primary transmitting locations. Nearly 80 per cent of the world's population is within listening range of TWR's radio transmissions.

Dr. Paul Freed's interest in missions began in his childhood years. He grew up in the Middle East, where his parents were missionaries, and visited Arab villages with his father. In 1948, he attended a Youth For Christ conference in Europe and there heard a plea by two Spanish people for Christian workers to come to Spain. He went, and then decided that radio was the only way to reach the masses.

Blanketing the earth

The transition from the mid-1980s into the 1990s presented new challenges for the Mission. Beginning in 1989, the overthrow of communist governments in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union opened the doors to two new transmitting locations on the European and Asian continents. On Aug. 20, 1992, TWR signed a contract with Radio Tirana in Albania to begin broadcasts to Eastern Europe via AM radio, and broadcasting began Oct. 1. Within the first year, TWR experienced a dramatic increase in mail response from England and central Europe. Then in 1993, TWR met with representatives of the Main Center of Broadcasting Networks in Russia, and eventually signed an agreement to broadcast Christian programming into South Asia. More than half a billion people are within range of the signal beamed from Russia.

Today, a worldwide staff of over 1,000 serve at Trans World Radio's transmitting sites, studios, and offices in more than 30 countries.

Canadian churches hold 'Healing Justice Month'

OTTAWA, (CCJC) — A network of churches across Canada has declared this month "Healing Justice Month" to promote a different criminal justice approach that fosters healing for victims, offenders and communities alike.

One feature of Healing Justice Month is forums in which victims, offenders and others share experiences and insights on healing in response to the devastation caused by crime. Another is an acclaimed photograph/reflection exhibit featuring men and women serving life sentences.

Healing Justice Month is co-sponsored by the Mennonite Central Committee Canada (MCC) and the Church Council on Justice and Corrections, groups which challenge the emphasis on punishment and retribution as ineffective solutions for the serious harm crime does to people and communities.

"We wish to be pro-active in sending a positive message about justice to our nation," announced Wayne Northey, director of Victim Offender Ministries, MCC.

"Christian justice in response to crime is not about the destructive idea of giving people their due, 'just deserts' as it is called. It longs rather to give everyone opportunity for healing."

"Healing Justice" opposes reciprocal retaliation to crime, addressing instead the immediate special needs of victims and communities but refusing to scapegoat the offender, which tends to perpetuate the cycle of crime.

The photo exhibit, which will tour to Kitchener-Waterloo, Ont., to Winnipeg, and several British Columbia sites, does not directly indicate its subjects are prisoners who are actually serving life sentences in Pennsylvania.

"Without stereotypical cues, I was able to focus on the lifers as individuals," comments Tom Kennedy, photo editor for *National Geographic* magazine who viewed the exhibit at a conference for Christian photojournalists.

"Society has so many ways of dehumanizing prisoners, thereby making it easier to ignore them as stereotypes; this went a long way towards rectifying the dehumanization."

The Church Council on Justice and Corrections represents 11 denominations and is a national church council active in the field of criminal justice, crime prevention and family violence initiatives. CCJC's member groups are the Anglican Church of Canada, Canadian Baptist Federation, Council of Christian Reformed Churches in Canada, Disciples of Christ in Canada, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, Mennonite Central Committee Canada, the Presbyterian Church in Canada, the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers), the Roman Catholic Church, the Salvation Army and the United Church of Canada.

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New Tribes missionaries taken hostage in Colombia

VILLAVICENCIO, Colombia (EP) — Two New Tribes Missions workers in Colombia were kidnapped last month by a group of about 20 guerillas.

The guerillas entered the organization's mission station and school for missionary children near the town of Villavicencio and demanded to see the mission pilots. When they learned that the pilots were not at the station, they went through some of the homes stealing things, then took New Tribes missionaries Steve Welsh and Tim Van Dyke hostage.

Mission officials suspect that the two were kidnapped for propaganda purposes and to show the strength of the leftist guerilla movement. The two hostages were bound and led into the surrounding mountains.

New Tribes Missions workers were also kidnapped in Panama about a year ago, and their guerilla captors are insisting that the missionaries will be freed only if a cash ransom is paid. The mission refuses to pay ransom for hostages, knowing that if guerillas can profit from kidnapping it will become commonplace.

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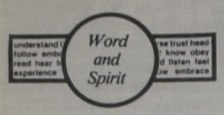

Andrew Kuyvenhoven

A taste for good things

"Whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable — if anything is excellent or praiseworthy — think about such things" (Phil. 4:8).

Through Paul, God tells us that our minds should be busy with good and beautiful things. "Think on them"; "reflect upon these things."

That's very hard for some of us. When the conversation at work does not rise above the hockey scores, the news of the day is brutally blatant about the latest sexual scandal, and your spouse fills you in on congregational gossip, your mind hardly hits on things that are true, noble, pure and lovely. You'd have to force yourself to think about God or about love, or make your mind dwell on "a thing of beauty" that's "a joy forever."

Apart from the practical difficulty, this text also presents a theoretical problem. The list of virtues that Paul enumerates could have been borrowed from the Stoics, the scholars say; from the secular humanists, we would say.

A Mormon leader once told me that this text from Phillipians was the motto of the members of his church. And that is no wonder; because there is nothing particularly Christian about this text. All that precedes this text (beginning with verse 4, "Rejoice in the Lord always") and all that follows the text ("What you have seen and heard from me, put into practice") places the virtues in a thoroughly Christian context. But, taken by themselves, the good, the true and the beautiful that should be uppermost in your and my minds, merely represent the best values of the present world.

Learning from unbelievers

There are always Christians who teach that we have nothing in common with unbelievers. And from at least one perspective they are right. For me, living is Christ. And those who despise and deny him might as well live on a different planet. But they don't. They live in the world my God created. They and I have to deal with all his laws and may enjoy all his gifts. Undoubtedly we share many things that are noble, right, pure, lovely and praiseworthy.

Sometimes non-Christians have better tastes for lovely things, good music and honorable stories than Christians do. True, a Christian would still have a saving Word for that cultured person. But the Christian might also learn a few things from the other.

Scholars may wonder just what Paul's relationship was to the moral philosophy of his time. But a pastor who has not only attended the formal wedding vows of many couples but also their happy wedding feasts (over many years), can see the need of what Paul is saying. Very many of these parties were good and beautiful. Others were shockingly low-brow.

Anyone who can improve the tastes and choices of the Christian community will render a service to God.

If hockey talk, sex and money talk and gossip dominate your thoughts and conversations of the day, perhaps you should collect flowers, play the violin or read Shakespeare. You must do something to lift up your thoughts and have some real fuel for your mind. In this respect people are like computers: you cannot put garbage in and expect roses to come out.

Andrew Kuyvenhoven is a retired Christian Reformed pastor and Banner *Editor who lives in Grand Rapids, Mich.*

CRC leaders assure members their church remains committed to Scripture

Critics are 'offended' by 'emotional appeal'

Marian Van Til

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich.— Impelled by the ongoing condemnation of conservative individuals and groups from both inside and outside the church, leaders of the Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRCNA) have sent a letter to every Christian Reformed household in the U.S. and Canada to reassure church members that the critics' charges of unorthodoxy are untrue.

The letter is signed by church board of trustees president Allan Jongsma, executive director of ministries Peter Borgdorff and general secretary Leonard Hofman.

The church leaders admitted they have (in most instances) not responded to the critics' "negative networking" until now because the church offices and agencies have wanted to trust that "people of goodwill would recognize the distinction between truth and distortions of the truth or blatant untruths." The leaders are responding now, however, "because of the pain that many members experience when the church they love is attacked," and "lest anyone get the impression the charges are true."

The general charge the letter cites is that the CRC has "departed from its confessional position that the Holy Scriptures are our only rule for faith and practice."

The letter assures members that "the assertion is simply not true." It elaborates by saying that "through the years synods...have affirmed the faith of the church in the infallibility of Scripture, and urged upon the church the approach of humble faith in the Word of God."

The leaders acknowledge that there are differences of intrepretation on some issues but that they occur "among those who are equally devoted to the Scriptures and are within the fellowship of the same denomination." To conclude that that "automatically means that some uphold the Bible while others do not is unfair to those who prayerfully struggle to understand the teachings of the Word and is harmful to the fellowship of the body of Jesus Christ we call the church," says the letter.

Members are then urged to judge their church on the basis of the denomination's own "official confessions, statements, decisions and actions," and not on "false accusations gathered from here or there."

The leaders assert that the CRCNA is being "blessed by the Lord with the Spirit's presence in so much of its ministry around the world," and has many reasons to celebrate both God's faithfulness and the faithfulness of church members.

Not impressed

Predictably, the letter drew broadsides from the very critics to which it alludes —partially because the letter does not name the critics. First to respond was Reformed Believers Press Service, an outgrowth of the conservative paper *Christian Renewal* but singlehandedly written by Darrell Todd Maurina, who is a member of a Congregational church. Maurina fired off a three-and-one-half-page, single-spaced press release about the letter. He is concerned about how much it cost the CRC to send out the letter, acknowledges that the figures could not be "precisely determined" and then speculates at length as to what those costs actually were.

The remainder of Maurina's report interviews various outspoken conservatives who were "offended" by the letter.

For example, Laurie Vanden Heuvel, editor of *Outlook*, intrepreted the letter as an attempt to "lull people to sleep with their assured belief in infallibility." And former Calvin College board member Casie Freswick (who "spent several years fighting CRC members...who call God 'She'") is quoted as saying, "This is an emotional appeal, not a rational or theological appeal.... It's just the typical denominational response of not dealing with the issue."

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How celibate are Christian singles?

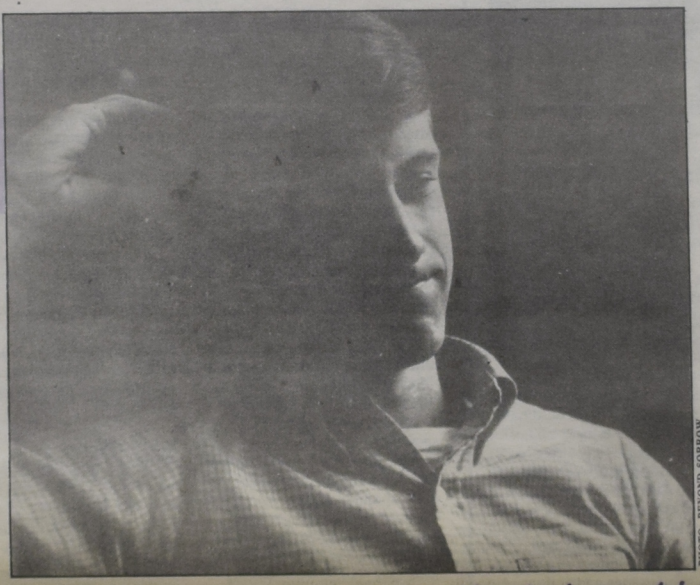


PHOTO: BEYOND SORROW

A multitude of emotional and spiritual facets of a single's personality affect his/her decision to be celibate or not.

Rusty Hurst

This is a challenging time to be a Christian single. Immorality is flaunted on television, in videos, advertisements and magazines, and on the job.

As a single parent I've experienced the challenges to overcome sexual temptations. I wondered if others have the same struggles, feelings of weakness and fear of failing the Lord. Has their faith prevailed? Have others found a lasting sense of completeness in life without fulfilling love, romance, a spouse and sexual relations?

To find the answers, I surveyed Christian singles in Portland, Oregon; the Tri-Cities, Washington; Spokane, Washington; and Missoula, Montana. I asked 12 questions. (See sidebar.)

When the survey results were in, it appeared that the three recent decades of loose sexual attitudes prevailing across North America had struck a blow against Christian singles' morals. The rate stands at 41 per cent not celibate and not about to change. The highest age group (30-40) is 65 per cent sexually active. The reason the figures aren't higher is because many do not have anyone special in their lives right now.

Not complete

It seems even for the Christian single the fear of missing out on the sexual activities of life intertwines with the world promoting a "grab all the gusto you can — you deserve it" philosophy. We are subtly told you can't be happy without romance — you need to be with somebody to be complete.

"I just want someone to be with, to share my lifetime goals, to share all the parts of my life" is the response of many singles.

As years pass and dreams are not being fulfilled, singles hit the bars, fill out "pay for introduction" applications and solve their single situation by jumping into bed with Mr./Miss Magic. Many find too late, as did a Washington woman who said, "There is no Mr. Magic, and all this hunting is far worse than doing or being without."

A Montana single explained, "As more time goes by, the less desire for sex I have. It scares me that I may lose my sexuality, and along with that some of my sensitivity."

From Oregon a divorced man in his 40s said, "I have a strong need to be validated as important to someone other than my children. I don't get it at my job nor at my church where I and my ministry seem to be invisible and unrecognized. I lack that other half married couples have to reassure me I am valuable. It makes me question many parts of my being — not just my sexuality and masculinity."

Old habits surface

A multitude of emotional and spiritual facets of a single's personality affect his/her decision to be celibate or not. One is the category of single into which they fall.

There is no typical single nor single's reasoning pattern. But the struggle of the single-again group, along with those individuals who admittedly were promiscuous before becoming Christians, seems intensified because they have been sexually active in the past and old habits and accustomed responses are difficult to break. The same decision is there every time the chemistry clicks, the other person seems right and desires seem to fall into place at the same time.

The noncelibates

The never-marrieds have the same longings and heartfelt needs. Plus, they feel the pressure of the biological clock pushing them. One said, "We don't stop being human, full of weaknesses and needs, just because we are Christian and single."

The survey respondents, who were either "not celibate" or "not satisfied most of the time," appeared to have, according to their comments, a lack of knowledge of the biblical teachings of celibacy or a lack of desire or power to be obedient on the subject.

People love to be soothed by certain elements of Christianity — God is loving and good, heaven awaits them, God only wants the very best for us, etc. They slide past the commands and go right to the promises when it enables them to do what they want at the moment.

It is sad to see how some noncelibate Christians justify their disobedience on this issue of fornication. For instance, "The human sex drive is natural, God-given, and good. If I wish to sleep with a woman I will, and I will thank the Lord for his gift without guilt."

Another said, "I like sex. I do not believe in being celibate, but I believe in protection. God helps me stay committed to my relationship in which sex is a part."

And, "As a human being and once married, I believe it is impossible to stay sexually uninvolved. Sex drives are natural and normal, and at my age very active."

"I am not celibate," one responded, "although it is my desire to be so. I have recently made some mistakes that I regret greatly and do not desire to repeat. Loneliness has me do things that are compromising my beliefs. I expect God will provide the means for me to have a celibate life if I desire to and if I obey him."

And, "Neither being single nor celibate has anything to do with my spiritual sense of satisfaction. They are conditions of my physical person, and that's all."

The decisions are based on habits, age, circumstances, personal comfort, fun and focusing on immediate gratification of temporary desires. Where does God fit in here?

Some obviously miss the fact that he is here to guide and teach us (see Isaiah 3:21, 41:10,13; 42:6; Psalm 32:8). And by his strength we have power over sin (see 1 John 1:9; Prov. 3:5-8). We have to ask for help, then let him take over.

Celibate but not satisfied

The next group of responses came from singles who are celibate, yet are not at peace

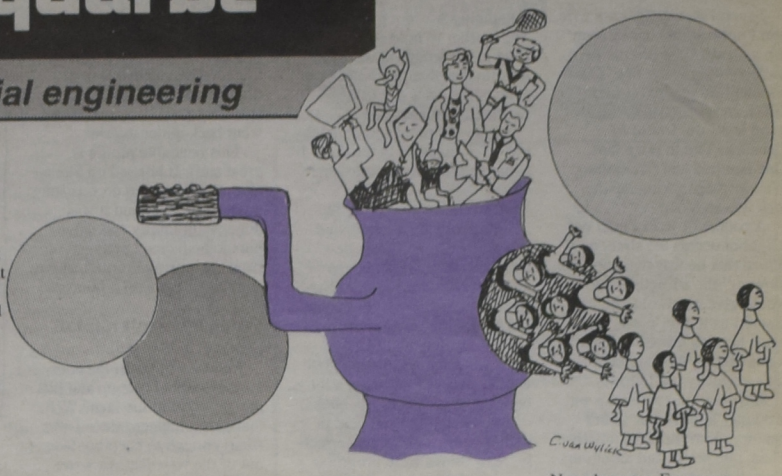
The survey

The 12 questions asked in Rusty Hurst's survey included these:

1. How do you define celibacy, and according to that definition, are you celibate? If so, why and for how long?
2. Do you find yourself in sexually compromising situations? If so, what do you do?
3. Have you experienced God's protection or rescue in those instances? How and when?
4. What are your weakest areas regarding sexual temptations?
5. What do you expect from the Lord, if anything, for living a celibate life at this time and why?

'All shall equal be'

A lament against social engineering



Ralph L. De Groot

No one remembers just exactly when it all started. All we know now is that it happened long ago.

Before it did, much had been written about it — some writing, very deep, profound and learned. Some of it just plain gobbledy-gook; that is, if gobbledy-gook is ever plain.

Much had also been said about it. The government claimed everyone wanted the changes. The people couldn't be quite as certain. No one knew "everyone."

However, in and around the early '90s citizens still believed politicians — on every third Tuesday of the month, that is. People are more consistent nowadays. They don't believe anyone or anything at any time.

In any event, everyone found everything wrong and it all had to be changed at once.

The change was brought about by shouting — which is easier than writing. The latter takes discipline, some sweat and a bit of responsibility. Not everyone was in favor of sweat and responsibility.

When the shouting got loud enough, all manner of things began to change. Even the spelling of words. Duty became booty. You acquired that by exercising rights.

The way things were

Initially that which was spoken by reasoned voices was done so thoughtfully. People were known even to listen. Most were inclined to think about that which was being said. Quite a few changed their attitudes and actions. A goodly number of them realized that not everything was well under the sun.

At that time most people still knew about the sun. There were then some days when it could be seen to rise. The smog is permanent now.

Way back — before the shouting amounted to hysteria — people used to be reminded of ancient notions about how to live and why. For centuries one day a week had been set aside to dwell on such things and rest a bit. Overnight, the shouting changed all that. It's called Noneday now. Everyone agreed that name was sufficiently neutral and inoffensive.

Saturday was left alone. Those who observed that day had, as a people, suffered enough and were only a minor

Continued on p. 12...

with their situation all the time. As one single confessed "No, I am not satisfied. I do not enjoy living alone, having no one to share anything with. I have emotional needs like anyone else, and having sex with your spouse is important to fulfilling those needs. In the (years) I have been a widow, I have not even been asked for coffee. I don't know where to begin socializing, much less worry about getting into sexual temptations.... I try to ignore my sexual drives. If you live the way the Bible teaches, the Lord will protect you emotionally and physically, but it doesn't guarantee satisfaction."

Another responded, "I am tired of the single life and am ready to get married. It is especially difficult when a woman gets aggressive sexually with me. When my ex-fiancee and I got engaged, she kept saying it would be all right to have sex since neither of us were virgins. God showed me the truth and caused our separation. I believe in his time he will fulfill all my desires — spiritually, mentally, and physically — with the wife he will give me."

"Satisfied, yes. Sexually, no. Romantically, no," another confessed. "I have many friends I see socially. My beliefs stop me from going all the way. When it comes right down to it, no sex is no big deal."

The celibate and satisfied

The survey respondents who were either not celibate or not satisfied lack commitment to biblical teachings when compared to the 59 per cent who are celibate and satisfied.

This third group notes how the Bible tells them "to honor God with your bodies and flee from sexual immorality" (see 1 Cor. 6:18-20.) They have learned that temporary physical satisfaction does not substitute for the deeper peace given according to God's plan.

Even though the previously married Christian single does occasionally miss the sharing and intimacy of married life, many are trusting God for satisfaction and peace regarding their sexual lives.

They have distinct beliefs about the sanctity of sexual intercourse within a marriage. "Sex is not a pastime or social recreation. It is an expression of deep feeling and commitment to a spouse and to God," said a 30-year-old Spokane single. "I am satisfied to remain a virgin until God chooses to provide me with a mate."

The Word tells us, "Lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways [sexual temptations, loneliness, grief over the denial of a traditional family life, etc.] acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight" (Prov. 3:5,6).

God is faithful

One person after another testified to God's faithfulness for deliverance and peace. Psalms 23 and 34 were most referred to by the men. The women turned the most to Isaiah 54:1,5,6; Psalm 68:5 and 146:9 for comfort. First Corinthians 10:13 was most often claimed by both groups equally: "No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it."

The "rescues" reported included everything from phone calls to a rock thrown through the window. The key seems to be that the committed Christian seizes the opportunity and flees the scene of temptation. Here are a few testimonies:

"I am still a virgin. My friends tell me I'd feel differently if I did it. I'm sure I would, and not for the better.... I try to date Christian men because they seem more accepting, but they still try. I have to tell them to stop and take me home."

Another responded, "I am celibate, and God has given me a joy I've never known. I do have my days of wondering why I'm single, but that soon passes through the joy of the Lord."

I live for Christ

"Through fasting and prayer I crucify my flesh daily," another said. "I live for Christ, not myself. Sexual love is a language reserved only for my spouse-to-be. I want this person to have been celibate, and I offer the same in return. Satisfaction comes by standing pure before my heavenly Father."

And, "In the past I've given in, but I've since turned it over to the Lord and am being strong in him. I expect to live a life of joy and contentment because I know the Lord has complete control over me and my well-being. I have the reassurance that his grace will be sufficient. In the meantime, I pray, pray, pray!"

And, "I am able to be alone and explore who I am in Christ and what I want to do with my life. I feel I am growing in different directions than if I were still married."

The key to celibacy and satisfaction with that lifestyle lies in being sold on Jesus, but that kind of commitment doesn't come easy. It takes an intentional investment in prayer and Bible study. The rewards in this life as well as the hereafter are well worth the effort.

Rusty Hurst, not her real name, is a single mother who lives in Washington state.

Confessions of a *do-it-yourself* plumber

Irving R. Bos

Several months ago my wife and I noticed that our kitchen tap leaked a little around the base, spilling water onto the counter. We ignored it for a while, but it persisted like all good leaks do. I went to Canadian Tire to price taps. One hundred and five dollars! Well, perhaps taking another tack was in order.

A couple of weeks later our neighbor across the street mentioned that he was replacing his "fowcet" (he's English) and would give us his old one. He assured us it didn't leak, and when he says it doesn't leak, we're talking the Sahara desert. He's a finicky old fellow.

Anyway, we got the tap and promptly laid it away in our laundry room for eight months. Then, one bright and ambitious day when I should've stayed in bed, I decided to install the replacement tap.

I crawled into the dark depths where dust rags rest and Mr. Muscle and Mr. Clean await the cheerful morning greetings of the keeper of the home, and went to work. I kept my mouth shut to avoid swallowing the black gunge that collects underneath the sink.

The old tap came out nicely. It was a lousy job but better than spending 150 bucks. I then put the "new one" in. Something was not quite right. The washer to hold the tap up snug to the wood (in theory) was smaller than the hole. Not exactly the principle of a washer, I thought.

Lucky for me, another neighbor stuck his head in the door. I explained the situation to him.

'No problem'

"No problem" he said, and gripping his pipe firmly between his teeth he set out to make a new plate washer. One cookie sheet and the back of an old dryer, plus an hour of hacksawing, drilling and filling later, we had a reasonable plate washer. A lot of work but a lot better than spending 105 bucks.

Back under the sink and in with the tap. Snug, it fit perfectly. Now things were progressing. Just hook up the lines....

Something was not quite right. It seemed that where the new tap expected to be fed water and where the pipe expected to feed the water to, were about four inches apart vertically and two inches horizontally. I remembered neighbor #1 had said something about "pliant piping." I figured he was talking about some sort of hosing and neighbor #2 confirmed this.

Off to Canadian Tire for plastic piping. They didn't have any but they did have some "much better" metal braided piping at $6 per length. I needed two so that was $12. That was at least better than spending $105. I bought it and went back under the sink.

This bendable piping is great stuff. It hooked up like a charm. All I had to do was snug up the odd thing and it was done. With family and neighbors in audience I emerged from the sink and turned on the cold water tap with a flourish.

When $75 isn't a lot of money

You know how in the comics the water shoots up and hits the guy right in the face? Well, that didn't happen, since I was smart enough to keep my face out of the way. But the water certainly shot up. I quickly turned off the water supply, mopped up and examined the tap which was guaranteed not to leak.

Neighbor #1 surmised that perhaps the rings had become "parched." I think he meant that they had dried out. So back to Canadian Tire again. I said hello to my buddy at the plumbing counter and got new rings at a cost of $4. Expensive, but better than spending 105 bucks.

Back home I went, where I learned all about Moan taps and where the rings should go (by this time I had a few ideas of my own). I managed to put the rings in, replace the tap and hook up the water again. Now for the grand inauguration of the "fowcet."

I turned on the tap... and a quiet, steady, small but defiant stream of water came out of the *handle*!

That was the limit. I turned off the water, disconnected all the hoses, unscrewed the nuts and, you guessed it, went straight back to Canadian Tire — straight to the $105 tap which was, fortunately, on sale for $75.

I slunk past my buddy at the plumbing counter, paid for the tap, went home and installed it in five minutes. It works perfectly. Seventy-five dollars seems like a lot of money, but it's better than having water all over your counter.

Irving Bos is manager of Information Systems Operations in Burlington, Ont.

'All shall equal be'

...continued from p. 11

irritant to everyone.

All other reminders of archaic traditions were also neutered. There are now no conifers. Perhaps the very old remember those trees with needles from their childhood days. They were replaced by weeping willows. Maples soon fell under the ax as well. Instead the ragweed leaf was adopted as the national emblem.

Same rules for everyone

As the shouting got even louder, the elected representatives mistook the volume of sound for that of the majority. This gave them licence to correct all wrongs — real and imagined — by law. They called it "equity legislation."

At the onset, people accepted the idea. It appealed to their sense of fairness and justice. Equality of opportunity. The same rules for everyone. After all, being a welder at that time still required that you knew how to light the blow torch.

Soon such standards were seen as too restrictive and unreasonable. Thereafter, job application forms could only consist of a blank piece of paper on which to put a picture. In it, one or more fingers — from one to 10 — were held up to indicate preferred orientation. In that way benefit entitlements could be allocated according to the new numbered scale; the more fingers, the more benefits.

These enlightened moves were heralded as a great advance in social justice. Everyone, of course, was in favor of advancing social justice.

Mediocrity reigns supreme

There was a minor problem. Many blow torches did not get lit. To remove the resultant disparity, the officially permitted use of blow torches was reduced to a limited number of hours per week. They called it "social contracting." Thereafter, it all balanced quite nicely.

The media, on the whole, was left untouched by the demand for change. They had been appropriately sensitive for a long time. Over the years this had come to mean sensationalism, not speaking the truth nor daring to ask for it, and being cozy with anyone claiming some unearned entitlement.

The Rule of Law itself took on new meaning. Self-induced drunkenness on the weekend produced the right to paid sick leave on Monday. Threatening others with bodily harm (or worse) translated into taking a seat in Parliament to represent the values, hopes and aspirations of the nation.

Finally then, it was achieved. Everyone was equal. Everyone had equity. All were now politically correct. The great social engineering experiment had run its course.

Passive mediocrity replaced vibrancy and a levelling dullness settled over the land. Everyone was lethargically the same.

The stifling boredom was only disturbed by a periodic plaintive moaning and occasional crescendo-cry, not unlike the pains of childbirth. Here and there a few old-fashioned folks whispered that it was the groaning of the whole creation. For what or why, no one knew or cared.

Ralph L. De Groot, retired from the RCMP, wrote this article in Peterborough, Ont., during a snowstorm. When the weather warms up, he becomes more mellow.

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Finance

The use of equity investments for inflation protection

An important factor to consider in any financial and investment planning is the impact of inflation. While many people would suggest that inflation is no longer a problem at two per cent, there are many convincing arguments that suggest investors should continue to consider inflation a potential problem.

The impact of inflation on investments will be shown with two examples. We will use inflation and interest rates of 10 per cent. Even though both rates are currently much lower, the calculations are very simple to do in one's head. For an example of interest-bearing investments, it will be assumed that $1,000 has been placed in a guaranteed investment certificate, or term deposit. For the lending out of your money, you are guaranteed a 10 per cent return, or $100 per year.

A 10 per cent inflation rate will also be assumed. In year two, you will still receive the $100 promised to you, even though it now buys what $91 bought the year earlier. We see then, that the "guarantee" applies only to the number of dollars paid, not to the purchasing power of those dollars.

Assume that you are looking, instead, at investing in a business. The projected earnings are $100 this year. In order to get a 10 per cent return, you would pay $1,000 for this business. The company earned the $100 by selling its product or service for $2,000, while it cost $1,900 to make or provide it.

All prices and costs go up at the same rate. The price for the company's product is now $2,200, while the cost has climbed to $2,090. This leaves a profit of $110.

Drastic results

This 10 per cent increase in profit is significant. Imagine that the business is now up for sale. A new investor is also looking for a 10 per cent rate of return and is therefore willing to pay $1,100 for the $110 in earnings. While there are innumerable other factors that can affect a business and its valuation, this example does illustrate how inflation can affect different investments.

The superiority of equity investments has been verified in an important historical study by Ibbotson and Sinquefield called *Stocks, Bonds, Bills, and Inflation*. In this research, the annual rate of growth for the investments named in the title, for the years 1926 through 1992 was compiled. The results are dramatic.

For this 67-year time period, Government of U.S. treasury bills had an average annual compound growth rate of 2.56 per cent. In dollar terms, $1 invested in 1926 grew to $11.64 by 1992, assuming no taxes were paid on the growth.

The really interesting results came from the stocks, where the broadly based Standard and Poors 500 index was used. (The S&P 500 is an index of the largest 500 companies in the U.S. market.) The average annual compound growth rate for this period was 10.3 per cent. One dollar invested in 1926 grew to $717.54 by 1992. Clearly, stocks outperformed all the other investment alternatives in this time period, which by the way, includes the Great Depression.

Democracy fundamental

The results shown above are history. What about the future? What will make investments in businesses superior? The operation of businesses is the cornerstone of our economic and social system. It should be pointed out right now that this concept is based on the premise that our leanings to a democratic, free enterprise economic and social system will continue for at least the foreseeable future. This assumption is fundamental to the investment decisions you have to make, no matter what type of investment you choose for yourself.

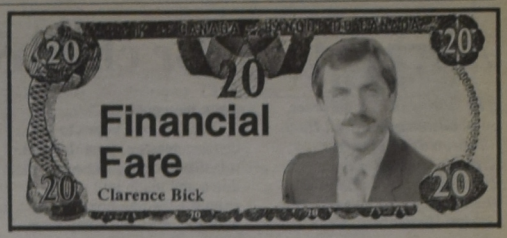
In Canada, most of us work in the private sector of the economy. Businesses hire us because of the potential profit that can be made from our labor. Our labor is used to create goods and services for consumption by the general public. The profit from our labor is to compensate the business owner for the effort and risk required in running that business. In turn, we earn an income, which is used to support a lifestyle. Any lifestyle we choose requires that at least part of that income is used to purchase goods and services from businesses. It is this cycle that makes our economic system work.

Imagine inheriting a business. Now you must choose whether to keep it, or sell it and make a different investment. A major part of the decision will be based on the expected rate of return. The only way that our society and economy can continue as it currently exists is if business ownership on average receives a higher reward than earning interest.

What can we conclude from this? First of all, equity investments provide an excellent hedge against inflation. Second, *properly* investing in the business sector is safer than most people believe, since it is an investment in our basic economic structure.

Clarence Bick is a financial planner in Ancaster, Ont.

See page 16 for Business Directory



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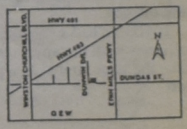

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Meditation/Books

A tree story for children

The Tale of the Three Trees, retold by Angela Elwell Hunt, illustrated by Tim Jonke. Oxford, England: Lion Publishing Co., 1989, ISBN 0-7459-17437. Reviewed by Sophie Vandenberg, Norval, Ont.

The talents of story writer Angela Elwell Hunt and illustrator Tim Jonke have combined to create the re-telling of "The Tale of The Three Trees," a unique gift to the Christian community. This beautiful book tells once again the traditional folk tale which has been handed down through the generations and has often been retold in churches at Easter and Christmas.

It begins with the words, "Once upon a mountaintop, three trees stood and dreamed of what they wanted to be when they grew up."

The first tree hopes to become a treasure chest. Instead, it is disappointed to be cut down and made into an animal's feeding box, coated with saw dust and filled with hay for hungry animals. Later, however, the tree-turned-manger becomes a cradle for the Christ Child. The tree realizes it has held the greatest treasure in the universe after all.

The second tree longs to be a sailing ship but is felled and made into a simple fishing boat which carries dead, smelly fish. Later, however, this tree-turned-fishing-boat carries a weary traveller who arises during a storm and declares, "Peace," and the wind and waves obey him. This tree, too, realizes that it has been used by the divine.

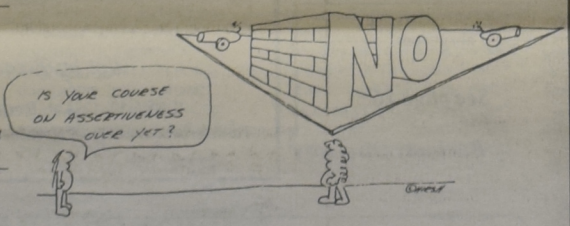
The third tree wishes only to be left on the mountaintop, growing tall and pointing people to God. But it is hewn and left lying confused in the lumber yard. However, one Friday morning it is startled when it is carried through jeering crowds and a man's hand is cruelly nailed to it. The tree feels harsh, ugly and cruel. However, in time she comes to realize that, indeed, whenever people think of her, she will point them to God.

This book can be read to the young for its simple story and its straightforward but beautiful illustrations, which carry the narrative well. It can be appreciated as well by mature readers for the deeper levels on which it operates.

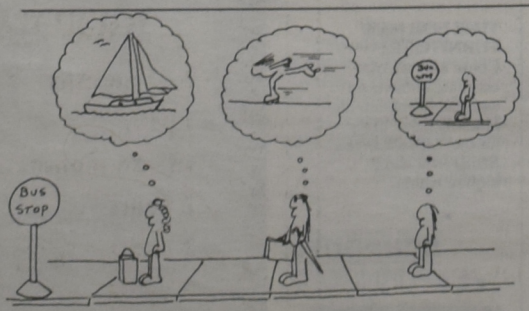
No church or Christian school library is complete without this book.

Seeing through yourself lightly

Getting Along: The ABC's of Human Relations, by Donna Sinclair and Allan Hirsh. Winfield, B.C.: Wood Lake Books, 1993. ISBN 0-929032-80-2. Softcover, 112 pp., $9.95. Reviewed by Robert VanderVennen.

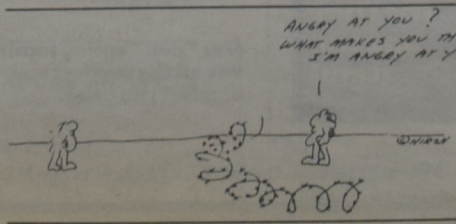


Everyone likes a good cartoon. In this book half the pages have cartoons by Allan Hirsh picturing human relations, often scenes at a therapist's office. The other pages have the well-crafted words of Donna Sinclair, arranged to show alphabetically the ideas that the cartoons depict.



There are cartoons and sentences that illuminate abandonment, burnout, communication, dreams, happiness, projection, soul, teenagers, unconscious, and many more. The pictures are a hoot, the words open our understanding, the the feel of it is more playful than grim. The point of view is more or less that of Jung.

If you've had some experience with therapy, you'll love the book. It makes a great gift.



Friends of God

Wayne Brouwer

Illumination

"Don't be deceived, my dear brothers. Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows" (James 1:16-17).

Illumination is an interesting word. It speaks of darkness and shadows, and the growing clarity produced by light and insight. It certainly expresses well the God-talk of the Bible: darkness and chaos flow until God speaks light and life; the psalmist walks through the Valley of the Shadow of Death with the testimony "The Lord is my Light and my salvation!" on his lips; Jesus appears as the Light of God entering a dark world; when he's on the cross darkness steals the light away as the shades of Hades appear to take over; yet on Easter morning resurrection comes with the dawn....

John says that "God is light!" and James echoes that confession here. At the same time, both talk about the deceptiveness of darkness that seems to cloud the reality of that light in the mind of many humans. C.S. Lewis captured the tension of Light and Darkness in spiritual combat in his space trilogy about Venus.

'Let there be light!'

The planet Mars, in Lewis' space fiction, is populated by an ancient race of God's creatures who never gave in to the lure of evil and remain holy and just. Earth, as we know, has fallen under the domain of the dark shadows, and the Great Creator has posted warning signs around it in space, calling it off limits to other races and clamping it in quarantine till the end of time. But then there's Venus. Venus is a new planet, with a more recent "Paradise" story of creaturely development. Just beginning to enjoy their budding love, a newly formed pair similar to Earth's Adam and Eve dance about in delight.

The evil Lord sends a vicious scientist named Weston from Earth to introduce sin to Venus by corrupting the lord and lady. The Great Creator now sends an ambassador of his own to Venus. And there hangs a world in the balance.

C.S. Lewis was able to create illuminating pictures of the tensions that develop in the creaturely spirit when surrounded by the darkness of evil, yet longing for the light of redemption and love. His pictures of world systems and personal spiritual battles are repeated every age and generation among us.

Lost in the dark

Take, for instance, a man who comes to tell me of the struggles of his life. He grew up in a "religious" home, he says. He was forced to go to church all the time. But it was so dark and foreboding. His father ruled with a heavy hand. It was all so righteous, but all so ugly too!

The man still goes to church, but anger burns out of him at his father, and seethes at the church that demanded, scolded, and twisted him; and anger explodes toward the vengeful and mean-spirited god that he learned about.

And there's the problem. He can never serve the god who dwells in the shadows and cruelly vents meanness and pain. But he'll never find the truth of his religion until deception's shadow has been sent packing by the illuminating glow of grace "coming down from the Father of heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows."

Wayne Brouwer is a pastor at First Christian Reformed Church in London, Ont.

Advice

Peter and Marja are IN

Dear P & M:

My question concerns well-meaning Christians who use the phrase "born again" in a way that causes confusion and hurt. Specifically, my mother is repeatedly being questioned by her granddaughter as to whether she is truly born again.

My mother is a healthy and alert, though frail, woman in her 90s. She has been widowed for 20 years. As a pastor's wife she and her husband served a number of small congregations in the Netherlands. She was always actively involved in the church and all her children attended Christian schools and went on to profess their faith.

Now my niece comes along and sends notes and portions of Scripture to her and the rest of my family suggesting that they may not know the Lord or be born again. In fact, this niece has even written me expressing her doubts about the sureness of my mom's salvation. As you can imagine, this is quite upsetting for my mother, especially since these insinuations are coming from her own granddaughter.

I have enclosed a copy of the letter which I wrote to my mother about this whole matter. Please comment on the situation and the way I handled it.

Dear Re-created in Christ:

We read your letter with interest. Indeed, your mother must be very alert mentally to be able to appreciate such an in-depth discussion. Good for her.

Your letter was very balanced. It began by stressing the importance of a personal relationship with the Lord. It ended with the advice to say Yes to anyone who asks if you're born again. In between, it listed the good points and the negative points of insisting on a born-again experience that can be pinpointed in time.

This is not the place to reprint your letter, but we do want to underscore two of your statements. We appreciate the way you explained that Jesus' phrase "born again" applies to everyone who is re-created in Christ. In other words, anyone who is a sincere follower of Jesus is re-born. We also appreciated the fact that you have room for different conversion stories.

In our experience, too, we know Christians who were converted suddenly at a crusade or church service, and we know many Christians whose faith grew during a long period of development in a Christian family. The Scriptures celebrate both. All you have to do is compare Paul and Timothy's testimonies. The one is not better than the other. Paul's dramatic conversion on the road to Damascus and Timothy's nurture by his grandmother Lois and mother Eunice are two wonderful testimonies to God's grace and marvelous leading in the lives of his people.

In one sense, your niece and your grandmother are like Paul and Timothy, and they should see each other with similar appreciation and love. In another sense, we find some humorous irony in the fact that your niece is questioning the very one who paved the way for her spiritual journey.

There is one thing that we can learn from people like your niece and that is to be more personal and confessional in the way we express our faith. For example, in your letter to us you listed your mother's credentials, which you took to be the fruit which proved that she was a healthy Christian tree. In that list you neglected to say the main thing, namely, that your mom loves Jesus.

Reading between the lines we understand that you know this to be true about your mother. But it's good to get to the bottom line and simply say it: my mom loves the Lord. This avoids the dangerous assumption that you are a member of God's family just because you were born to Christian parents.

Working with labels sets up different levels and classes of Christians. Every Christian tradition needs to confess this alienating sin. In our tradition, for example, the adjectives "Reformed" and "covenant" have sometimes been interpreted to set us apart from the church universal. In other traditions, adjectives like "born-again," "charismatic" and "Bible-believing" create a divide. With you, we look forward to the day when the only label that counts will be "Christian."

How wonderful to realize that the Lord has called all kinds of Christians with all kinds of stories about the way they are loved by Christ, and the ways in which they return his love.

Write to: P & M
c/o Christian Courier
4-261 Martindale Road
St. Catharines, ON L2W 1A1

Peter and Marja Slofstra are a pastor and wife team living in St. Catharines, Ont. They are assisted by an advisory panel consisting of Herman de Jong, Bill Lidkea, Tom Zeyl, Marian Van Til and Bert Witvoet.

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Seeking a volunteer

The ***Christian Courier*** is looking for a volunteer to join its editorial advisory committee. The committee meets once a month at the St. Catharines office to discuss editorial matters. We're looking for someone with an interest in writing and journalism. If you're willing to join, send a letter to **Bert Witvoet**, stating the contributions you think you can make to this advisory committee.

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ATTENTION!

a) *Christian Courier* reserves the right to print classifieds using our usual format.,

b) A sheet with information about an obituary sent by funeral homes is *not* acceptable since it leads to errors and confusion.

c) Photographs sent by fax *are not* acceptable. If you wish a photo included, send us the original.

d) *Christian Courier* will not be responsible for any errors due to handwritten or phoned-in advertisements.

e) The rate shown above for classifieds covers any length up to six column inches. *Christian Courier* reserves the right to charge for additional column inches at the rate of $13.50 per column inch (GST incl.).

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We offer a one-year subscription for only $20.00 (GST incl.) to the couples whose wedding is announced in the *Christian Courier* and to the parents of the child whose birth announcement appears in our paper. To facilitate matters, we encourage those who request the wedding or birth announcement to enclose $20.00 and the couple's correct address.

Christian Courier
4-261 Martindale Rd.
St. Catharines, ON L2W 1A1
Phone: (905) 682-8311
Fax: (905) 682-8313

Thank You

KALVERDA:

My family and I wish to thank all those who made the open house, in honor of my 80th birthday, such a special event.

I really appreciate that so many made the effort to join in the celebration and thank the Lord for blessing me in this way.

Meindert Kalverda.

Thank You

MIEDEMA:

It is with joy and thankfulness to our heavenly Father that we were able to celebrate our 50th anniversary on Jan. 27.

Thanks to everyone for all the cards, flowers, phonecalls and to all the folks who joined us at the community hall, despite the bad weather. You made it all so very special for us.

A special thank you to our children, grandchildren and great-grandchild, who gave us such a beautiful and memorable evening.

Luit and Fre Miedema, Waterford, Ont.

Births

GRIFT (NOORDHOF):

With gratitude to God we announce the birth of our first little "Griftlet",

JANITA DANIELLE

born Sunday, Jan. 23, 1994, at 8:51 a.m., weighing 7 lb., 3 oz.

Rich and Margaret Grift, 704 Dickinson S.E., Grand Rapids, MI 49507.

Proud grandparents are Richard and Joanne Grift, New Dundee, Ont., and Luke and Elsie Noordhof, Strathroy, Ont.

WIMMERS-WIERSMA:

"Children's children are a crown to the aged, and parents are the pride of their children" (Prov. 17:6).

Thankful to the Lord for the gift of grandchildren and great-grandchildren, Jan and Lucy Visscher (Wiersma) and Heine and Geertje Sietsma announce with pride and joy the birth of

BENJAMIN HARRISON
born Dec. 27, 1993,
a son for Albert and Cheryl Wimmers
and
KATLYN MARIE
born Jan. 16, 1994,
a daughter for Michael and Sandra Wiersma.

The Lord be praised for making all things well.

Birthdays

SPEELMAN:

PIETER SPEELMAN

hopes to celebrate his 95th birthday, D.V., on Monday, Feb. 14, 1994.

The family regretfully informed *Christian Courier* that, due to Mr. Speelman's illness, the open house (announced in last week's issue) had to be cancelled.

Mr. Speelman lives at 519-19th Ave., Hanover, ON N4N 3G4

Birthdays

VANBELLE:

Congratulations to Mrs. Martha VanBelle on the occasion of her 90th birthday!

On Monday, Feb. 21, 1994, D.V., we hope to celebrate the 90th birthday of

MRS. MARTHA VANBELLE
(SEGERS)

The Lord is good.

Wishing you a happy birthday Mom, from all of us.

Harry & Ada — Bowmanville
Gerald & Joanne — Seattle
Peter & Wiea — Edmonton
Bill & Grace — Abbotsford

17 grandchildren and eight great-grandchildren.

Reception/open house on Saturday, Feb. 19, 1994, from 2 to 5 p.m., 100 Glenhill Drive, Whitby, Ont.

Anniversaries

Woodstock

1959 February 13 1994

With thankfulness to God

HILLE (AL) and GRACE SLAGER
(nee DYKSTRA)

hope to celebrate their 35th wedding anniversary. We are thankful that you have been blessed with these years together Mom and Dad, and pray that God may grant you many more years.

With love from your children and grandchildren:

Patty & Karl Reyneveld — Woodstock
Jonathan, Jacob, Charlene, Derek
Peter & Diana Slager — Tavistock
Melissa, Scott, Amanda, Stephanie
Harry & Tammy Slager — Tavistock
Matthew, Ashley
Marlene & Mike Bloxsidge — Woodstock
Tony, Kevin
Donny & Toni Slager — Woodstock
Courtney, Kayla, Kyle
Hilda & Roy McDonald — Woodstock
Lori & Rob Wubs — Woodstock

Home address: R.R. #2, Tavistock, ON N0B 2R0

Anniversaries

"...like an eagle that stirs up its nest and hovers over its young...The Lord alone led him..." (Deut. 32:11-12a).

With everlasting joy and praise, we thank the Lord for blessing our parents,

JOHN and GERRIE VOORDENHOUT
(nee LOOIJE)

with 40 years of marriage on Feb. 10, 1994.

With love,

Paul & Jane VanHardeveld — Kincardine, Ont.
Amanda, Christina, Patricia, Wayne
John & Dorothy Voordenhout — Burlington, Ont.
Michael, Heidi, Christopher
Nick & Petra Voordenhout — Burlington, Ont.
Lee-Anne, Jennifer, Laura
Gary & Annette Voordenhout — Hamilton, Ont.
Nicholas, Tiffany
Martin & Linda Voordenhout — Carlisle, Ont.
Cheryl, Lindsay
Marian Voordenhout — Burlington, Ont.
Nellie Voordenhout — Burlington, Ont.
Irene Voordenhout — Barrie, Ont.
Michael & Cathy Frame — Toronto, Ont.

Address: 19 George St., Waterdown, ON L0R 2H0

1954 1994

With thankfulness to God, we celebrate with joy the 40th anniversary of our parents and grandparents,

GERRIET and ANNA ZANDBERGEN
(nee IEDEMA)

With all our love and best wishes from:

Albert & Frances Hummel — Exeter, Ont.
Jason, Kim, Shawn, Dayna, Gregory
Frieda Zandbergen — Saudi Arabia
Luke & Shirley Bouman — Londesboro, Ont.
Scott, Melanie, Bradley, Lauren, Darryl, Daniel, Brooke
Chris & Theresa Schnare — Sarnia, Ont.
Jennifer, Jessica, Julia
Ron & Jennifer Zandbergen — London, Ont.
Riley, Gerriet, Kyle

Home address: R.R. #1, Centralia, ON N0M 1K0

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Obituaries

On Tuesday, Jan. 25, 1994, at Shalom Manor, Grimsby, Ont., in her 85th year,

IRENE (YBELTJE) HOEKSTRA-DYKSTRA

was called by the Lord to be with Him in glory.

Born on Aug. 9, 1909, in Nes (WD) Friesland, the Netherlands.

Beloved wife of the late Edward (Ytzen) Hoekstra (1974).

Beloved mother of:

Neeltje & Jan Tuin Hof — Minnertsga, Fr., the Neth.
Tillie & Paul Roorda — Fenwick, Ont.
Richard & Ann Hoekstra — Dunnville, Ont.
Alice & Symen Langeraap — Dunnville, Ont.
Henry & Beulah Hoekstra — Wellandport, Ont.
Tina & Arnold Bennink — Fenwick, Ont.
Pete & Ann Hoekstra — Welland, Ont.
Ron & Rachel Hoekstra — Athens, Ont.
Jane & John Poelman — Mallorytown, Ont.

Beloved grandmother of 41 grandchildren and 52 great-grandchildren.

Funeral was held in the Bethany Chr. Ref. Church, Fenwick, Ont., led by Rev. H. Eshuis, on Jan. 28, 1994. Revelation 24:4.

Correspondence address: Mrs. Tillie Roorda, 1088 Balfour St., Fenwick, ON L0S 1C0

Hazerswoude Brampton
Dec. 17, 1912 Jan. 16, 1994

"For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith - and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God, not by works, so that no one can boast" (Eph. 2:8,9).

The Lord took home to eternal glory,

JANET KOETSIER

Beloved wife of Jacob Koetsier and mother of:

Jack & Joanne Koetsier — Listowel, Ont.
Keith & Jean Koetsier — Ethel, Ont.
John & Janet Koetsier — Clinton, Ont.
Rikki & Greg Eldridge — Stratford, Ont.
Murray & Pat Koetsier — Harriston, Ont.

20 grandchildren and two great-grandchildren. Predeceased by one daughter, Hendrika, 1944.

Funeral services were held at the Listowel Bethel Chr. Ref. Church, on Jan. 20, 1994.

Janet's Christian witness and influence will always be remembered.

Correspondence address: Jacob Koetsier, Holland Chr. Homes, Hope Towers, 7900 McLaughlin Rd. S., Brampton, ON L6V 3N2

Classifieds

Teachers

DUNDAS, Ont.: Calvin Chr. School has a definite **half-time Kindergarten position** for the 1994-95 school year while the regular teacher is on a one year maternity leave. Please forward applications or inquiries to:

Mr. Jack Zondag
Calvin Chr. School
542 Ofield Road North, R.R.#2
Dundas, ON L9H 5E2
Phone: (905) 627-1411

LANGLEY, B.C.: Langley Chr. School is a growing school of over 400 students, located in the beautiful Fraser Valley, appr. 40 km from Vancouver. Presently a K-7 school, LCS plans to introduce the Grade 8 level to its Middle School section this September. Plans are already in the works to develop a new Middle School and High School campus in the very near future.

Openings are anticipated at these levels:

- Grade 2
- Grade 4
- Grade 8 (language arts/social studies/Bible)
- Grade 8 (science/math/computer)
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- Additional part-time needs in the area of French and band/music may also be required.

If you are interested in getting involved in the excitement of a Christian school undergoing change, and if you love children and the Lord, consider submitting an application to join the LCS team.

Send applications to:

Leo Smit, Principal
Langley Christian School
21789-50th Avenue
Langley, BC V3A 3T2
Phone: (604) 533-2222

MAPLE RIDGE, B.C.: Haney-Pitt Meadows Chr. School is now accepting applications for openings in various grades for the 1994/95 school year. Please send resumes to:

Rod Berg, Principal
Haney-Pitt Meadows Chr. School
12140-203 Street
Maple Ridge, BC V2X 4V5
Phone: (604) 465-4442

REXDALE, Ont.: Timothy Chr. School in Rexdale has an opening (maternity leave) for a **Grade 2/3 teacher** from Oct. 1, 1994-mid March 1995. Please send resume and letter of application to:

Mrs. Coby Jonker, Principal
Timothy Chr. School
28 Elmhurst Dr.
Rexdale, ON M9W 2J5

Job Opportunities

FACULTY POSITION

The **Education Department of Calvin College** seeks candidates for either a one or two-semester faculty position. Candidates should have expertise in at least one of the following areas: **Education of the Mentally Impaired, Educational Psychology** (secondary), **Teaching of Reading** (secondary), **Theories of Curriculum and Instruction,** and **Student Teacher Supervision** (elementary).

Qualifications for the position include:
1) an earned doctorate or ABD;
2) elementary and secondary classroom teaching experience; and
3) a scholarship agenda.

Calvin is a Christian college within the Reformed tradition and is an equal employment opportunity employer.
Interested applicants should forward a letter stating qualifications and vita to:

Gloria Goris Stronks, Staff Development Committee,
Education Department, Calvin College,
3201 Burton S.E., Grand Rapids, MI 49546

TENURE-TRACK FACULTY POSITION

The **Education Department of Calvin College** seeks candidates for a tenure-track faculty position in philosophy of education and curriculum design and/or instruction.
Responsibilities include: teaching graduate and undergraduate courses in philosophy of education and curriculum and instruction, advising graduate and undergraduate students, and supervising student teachers.
Qualifications include:
1) an earned doctorate (or ABD) in a field related to curriculum or philosophy of education;
2) elementary or secondary classroom teaching experience; and
3) a scholarship agenda.
Calvin is a Christian college within the Reformed tradition and is an equal employment opportunity employer.
Interested applicants should forward a letter stating qualifications and vita to:

Gloria Goris Stronks, Staff Development Committee,
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100, 2975 Gladwin Road, Abbotsford, BC V2S 6W8

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TELECARE BRAMPTON

is looking for a full-time **OFFICE MANAGER**

The successful applicant should be familiar with office procedures and computers (WordPerfect), have some accounting skills and be comfortable working with volunteers. Telecare is a Christian-based Distress Centre with one full-time staff, two part-time and about 100 volunteers. Please send resume to: **P.O. Box 74116, Brampton, ON L6V 4J7 or Fax to: 905-459-3955.**

The Ontario Alliance of Christian Schools
is seeking applications for a

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This is an ideal opportunity for an individual who can demonstrate initiative, organizational skills, and financial leadership. The candidate reports to the Executive Director.

Experience in business, financial affairs, and computers is essential. A university degree and an accounting designation are recommended.

A position description is available upon request. Letters of interest, along with a resume and references, should be sent by **March 31, 1994**, to:

Dr. Adrian Guldemond, Executive Director
777 Highway 53 East
Ancaster, ON L9K 1J4
Phone: (905) 648-2100; Fax: (905) 648-2110

The Pascal Centre
For Advanced Studies in Faith and Science

Pascal Centre Director

The Pascal Centre at Redeemer College explores the relation of faith and science from a Christian perspective. The College is seeking an individual with proven experience in fundraising and management in an academic context. This individual should be skilled in interpersonal relations as well as in written and verbal communication. Applicants should be in agreement with the Reformed Christian basis of the College; a master's degree in a relevant discipline would be an asset. This is a funded, half-time position, which is available as a three-year appointment starting July 1, 1994, and will be filled at the level of assistant or executive director, depending on qualifications and experience. Send application including c.v., and arrange for three letters of reference to be sent to: The Human Resources Director, Redeemer College, 777 Hwy. 53 E., Ancaster, Ontario, L9K 1J4. Deadline: until position is filled. In accordance with Canadian immigration requirements, priority will be given to Canadian citizens or permanent residents of Canada.

Redeemer College — *A Christian University College*
777 Hwy. 53 E., Ancaster L9K 1J4

Send your questions to Peter and Marja
Confidentiality is assured

Classifieds

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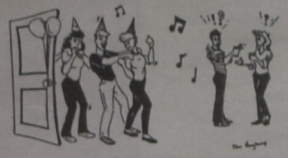
"Met Hartelijke Gelukwensen"
een blijspel in drie bedrijven
door
Dick Van Maasland



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March 11 and 12, 1994, at 8 p.m.
Tickets from Bill Hesselink, R.R. 3, Woodstock, ON N4S 7V7, (519) 539-2134
DRAYTON, Festival Theatre
March 19, 1994, at 8 p.m.
Tickets from Drayton Festival Box Office, P.O. Box 10, Drayton, ON N0G 1P0, (519) 638-5555
CLINTON, Town Hall
March 26, 1994, at 7 p.m.
Tickets from Sue Guetter, R.R. 4, Clinton, ON N0M 1L0 (519) 482-9257
PETERBOROUGH, Queen Mary Public School
April 9, 1994, at 8 p.m.
Tickets from Jack Van Winssen, 48 Facendi Court, Peterborough, ON K9J 6V4, (705) 745-2324

Refreshments in intermission
Admission - $7.00 in advance; $9.00 at the door
(Mail orders up to two weeks prior to performance must include cheque and self-addressed stamped envelope.)

Miscellaneous

HERITAGE PLACE
Aylmer, Ont.

Heritage Place is a Christian seniors residence in the town of Aylmer, Ont., with 1- and 2-bedroom apartments close to the Christian Reformed Church. At the moment we have a 1-bedroom unit available. If you are interested, or know of someone who might be interested in being part of a Christian community, call as soon as possible.
If you think you might like an apartment at a future date, it is important to put in an application now and be on the list. Registration does not obligate you in any way. For information call:

A. Vandenbrink: Phone (519) 775-2431; Fax (519) 775-2460
M. Booy: Phone/Fax (519) 765-1739

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Accommodation

VAKANTIE/WONINGRUIL

Gevraagd: Woning in of naaste omgeving van Hamilton, Ont., voor echtpaar (ong. 55 jaar) zonder kinderen.
Aangeboden: Woning in wijk van Groningen (stad) voor max. 4 personen.
Periode: Augustus + September 1994 (of gedeelte binnen deze periode).
Auto: Met gebruik van elkaars personenauto.
Brief: Voor 15 maart 1994 aan: Fam. A. van Ieperen, Bernhardlaan 26, 9744 EM Groningen, the Netherlands.
Informatie: Fam. W. Senema, Hamilton, Ont., tel. (905) 389-8768.

Personal

JANUARY 1994

THE CONSULATE-GENERAL WOULD LIKE TO COME IN CONTACT WITH THE FOLLOWING INDIVIDUALS:

van de GRAAF, Mr. Gerard, born October 4, 1923 in Enschede, immigrated to Canada March 31, 1967.

HOTCHKIS, Richard David, born May 15, 1952, immigrated to Canada January 26, 1984.

KUIPERS, Mr. Theo Harry, born November 6, 1928, last known address in the Netherlands: Gladiolensingel 47, Geleen, immigrated to Canada March 9, 1959.

SNOEK, Mr. Tom, born in 1928, last known address in the Netherlands: Utrecht, immigrated to Canada in 1954.

van UDEN, Mr. Johannes Marinus, born March 31, 1929, last known address in the Netherlands: Bakel (municipality Bakel and Milheeze), immigrated to St. Eustache, Manitoba, Canada on March 21, 1951.

VROMANS, Mr. Petrus Antonius, born March 27, 1929, last known address in the Netherlands: Gemert, immigrated to Canada June 10, 1953.

de WINTER, Mrs. Edith, born March 25, 1934 in Den Helder, last known address in the Netherlands: Rozendaalstraat 16, Amsterdam, immigrated to Canada July 8, 1964.

CONSULATE GENERAL OF THE NETHERLANDS,
1 DUNDAS STREET W., STE. 2106
TORONTO, ONTARIO M5G 1Z3

Calendar

Feb. 12 Fortieth anniversary First CRC, **Montreal**, Que. Special events on Saturday and Sunday. Info.: (514) 684-6229.

Feb. 13 Fortieth anniversary Hebron CRC, **Whitby**, Ont. Services at 10 a.m. and 6:30 p.m. Former members are invited. Info.: (905) 668-5141.

FEb. 13 Calvin Chr. Ref. Church, **Ottawa**, Ont., will be featured on CBC's "Meeting Place" at 12 noon. Calvin's interim pastor, Dr. Sierd Woudstra, will preach. Check your local CBC TV channel.

Feb. 14 CPJ event on "A time for action: Christians and the Liberal Government's agenda." Speaker: Gerald Vandezande. AT 7:30 p.m., First CRC, **Langley**, B.C.

Feb. 18 "King's View Friday," open house at The King's University College, **Edmonton**, Alta. Phone Admissions Office at (403) 465-3500 to register.

Feb. 18-20 "Modeling Christ in the Nineties Conference," at the Mount Carmel Spiritual Centre, **Niagara Falls**, Ont. Enjoy fellowship, discussion, prayer and walks to the Falls. Main speakers: George VanderVelde, Nick Overduin, and Agnes Kramer-Hamstra. Register by **Jan. 31**. For info. and registration forms contact Alice Witvoet at (905) 684-3991 (evenings) or (905) 688-5550, ext. 3412 (days).

Feb. 19 Concert by the "Mississauga Choral Society" with guest organist John Tuttle at 7:30 p.m., First United Church (151 Lakeshore Rd. W.), **Mississauga**, Ont. Works by French composers Faure, Langlais and Durufle. For tickets call the box office at (905) 278-7059.

Feb. 19 Annual benefit concert for "Telecare Brampton" by the "Canadian Orpheus Male Choir," at 8 p.m., St. Paul's United Church, 360 Main St. S., **Brampton**, Ont. Tickets: (905) 459-8439.

Feb. 25-26 Marriage preparation seminar at First CRC, 287 Water St., **Guelph**, Ont. Info. and registration: (519) 822-7720.

Feb. 25-26 Students of London District Chr. Secondary School present "The King and I." At 8 p.m., LDCSS, **London**, Ont. Info.: (519) 455-4360.

Feb. 25-27 "Marriage Enrichment Weekend," presented by Salem Chr. Mental Health Assoc. Leaders: Herman & Betty Vanderburg and Mike and Shirlene Abma. At Mount Carmel Spiritual Centre, **Niagara Falls**, Ont. Info.: (905) 528-0353.

Feb. 26 CPJ hosts special event in **Toronto**, Ont., featuring Innu speaker Elizabeth Penashue from Seshatshit, Labrador. Contact CPJ at 1-800-667-8046.

Feb. 26 Johann Sebastian's Bach's "Mass in B Minor" will be performed by the Niagara Symphony Orchestra and Chorus and soloists (conductor: Robert Cooper). At 8 p.m., St. Thomas Anglican Church (Ontario & Lake), **St. Catharines**, Ont. For info. and tickets call box office: (905) 687-4993. Second concert on Feb. 27 at 3 p.m.

Feb. 26 Fifth annual organ/choral concert by "The Osgoode Township Male Choir" and organist Andre Knevel. A "bon voyage" event prior to the choir's concert tour in the Netherlands. Soloists: Janet Guillen (soprano) and Derek Smith (trumpet). At 7:30 p.m., St. Andrew's Presb. Church, **Ottawa**, Ont. Info.: Cor Hogeveen at (613) 224-1597.

Feb. 27 Dutch worship service led by Rev. H.R. De Bolster, 3 p.m., CRC, **Ancaster**, Ont.

Mar. 3-5 Students of London District Chr. Secondary School present "The King and I." At 8 p.m., LDCSS, **London**, Ont. Info.: (519) 455-4360.

Save money by using the classifieds!

Teachers

SURREY, B.C.: Fraser Valley Chr. High School is an interdenominational school in the Reformed tradition serving families and students in the lower Fraser Valley. Due to changing staff and increasing enrollment, we have **three possible openings** for teachers with combinations of the following subject areas: **Bible, French, math, science, physical education, and athletic director** for the 1994/95 school year. Applicants should send resumes to:

Mr. Al Boerema, Principal
Fraser Valley Chr. High School
15353-92 Avenue, Surrey, BC
V3R 1C3
Phone: (604) 581-1033

News

TV confirms what we want to believe: Redeemer speaker

Soap operas are nature shows in reverse

Irene Bom

ANCASTER, Ont. — "All things work together for good to those who watch TV."

That's Romans 8:28 according to the theology of popular culture, said Quentin Schultze at the annual Staley lectures held recently at Redeemer College.

The professor of communications at Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Mich., told his audience of staff, faculty and students that TV is in the business of telling stories.

The pressure for good ratings means that these stories have to capture the basic beliefs that viewers either hold or want to hold. "TV is in the business of confirmation, not of education," he said.

And one of the beliefs that it confirms is that good will always triumph over evil.

A second is that evil exists "in the hearts of a few bad people" — villains whom the rest of society should get rid of.

The story lines of TV shows are understandable, said Schultze. "How shall we go on living in this fallen world without any religious commitment unless we say that the problems in the world are with other people?" he pointed out, adding that such beliefs have influenced our criminal system.

Soap operas seem at first to challenge the "confirmation theory." Like "nature shows in reverse," the soaps have no beginning and no end and show people "trying to get on top of other people — in bed and in corporations," said Schultze.

Such shows are a "metaphor of human beings assuming that good will triumph in their own lives because their own end has not yet come."

Schultze ended his main lecture by wondering how such shows have influenced Christians' views of their daily lives.

But critique of such shows is not enough, he added. Critique can sharpen the discernment of other Christians, but Christians should aim for a broader impact by producing "stories that show there may be problems with what they believe" and stories that "suggest more or less that there are some answers."

The independent Staley Foundation began funding the lectures at Redeemer College in 1989. Previous speakers include Henri Nouwen, Tony Campolo, Paul Marshall and Calvin Seerveld.

Woody Allen: A prophet after the order of Isaiah?

PHOTO: JOHN PATER

Stefan Ulstein in conversation with TKUC students.

John Pater

EDMONTON — Moviemakers like Woody Allen, Oliver Stone and Spike Lee can share the stage with biblical characters like Isaiah, Jeremiah and Amos, because "they're (all) prophets," says Stefan Ulstein, a Christian high school teacher and film critic from Washington state.

Ulstein says that, like the Old Testament prophets, these movie directors "see things and point out things" about their life and times. He says in their movies they "show that life is a pilgrimage; that life has a purpose."

Ulstein was the keynote speaker for an annual interdisciplinary studies conference held Jan. 26 and 27 at The King's University College in Edmonton. He addressed the theme of "The Christian, Mass Media and Popular Culture."

Ulstein teaches English and communications at Bellevue Christian School just outside of Seattle. He is also a film critic for several Christian journals and for the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer.*

Media not them

Ulstein's opening premise was that Christians don't understand the media. "Christians have opted to stay out of that marketplace of ideas," he asserts.

When he began teaching about the mass media 20 years ago, parents asked why he didn't stick to teaching books. "Too many Christians see the media as *them*," he said. "I started changing my perceptions of *us* and *them* when I started meeting *them*," he added.

Ulstein, who views 150 films a year, has opportunities to meet with and interview film makers and actors. "The people I've met from Hollywood," he said, "are really intelligent; surprisingly so."

Some are media illiterate

Ulstein tore a strip off prominent evangelicals like Dr. James Dobson of Focus on the Family. He said Dobson and a lot of others criticize movies like *The Last Temptation of Christ* without viewing them to the end.

"Most of these people are media illiterate," said Ulstein. "You can't critique something you haven't seen." Ulstein recalled how Dobson and other evangelical leaders had called on Christians to boycott *The Last Temptation* because of its apparent "blasphemous" portrayal of Christ.

Ulstein showed parts of the film to the TKUC audience. He said while he didn't think it was a great movie, it was not as unbiblical as was portrayed by Dobson and others.

Ulstein said unilateral bans by Christian leaders need to stop. "People who speak for all Christians keep the rest of us quiet," he said.

He commented further that "a lot of thinking Christians kept quiet" over the furore that greeted *The Last Temptation.* "You can't let someone else think for you," he added. He called on "believers to enter the world of the mass media" in order to offer "thoughtful media critiques."

Christian setting allows prophetic critique

In an interview for CC, Ulstein talked of how he offers such a critique. He said he often points to gospel ideas within films and to themes like sin and salvation.

He said he finds he can "use Kuyperian ideas almost verbatim in my critiques." He does that by pointing to the fact that "everyone looks at the world through certain spectacles." In this way, he can do a more thorough critique of films than can many non-Christians, he says.

In the classroom, Ulstein "has no problem showing violent or pornographic films." He can do that in a Christian school setting, he says, because he helps his students look at the films in a prophetic way — "here's the way it is, here's the way it should be."

He said he couldn't do such analysis in a public school. Ulstein has strong words for Christian schools which ban or censor most movies.

"You're getting paid for pretending to teach," he said, "if you can't show *Platoon* (an Oliver Stone movie about the Vietnam War which contains graphic violence and bad language) but you can encourage people to go into the Marines."

Ulstein said movie makers may not always promote Christian lifestyles, but good ones challenge all of us with their pointed critiques about our life and times."

In this way, they are secular prophets, "helping people on their spiritual journeys."

News Digest

Edited by Irene Bom

Swans come knocking

BERWICK-ON-TWEED, Eng. (Reuters) — Swans have wintered in this town for nearly 50 years, feeding on the effluent from a local brewery. However, since pollution curbs have halted the flow of grain and husks, residents say the birds are virtually "mugging" pedestrians for handouts.

They also "come knocking at our doors with their powerful beaks," one woman said. "You can't ignore them."

Married Woman, Divorce, launched

NEW YORK, N.Y. — *Married Woman* is a new U.S. magazine devised by New York writer/editor Kelly Good McGee. Browsing in the magazine section of a store shortly after her wedding, she noticed that she no longer cared about "10 Sexiest Ways to Snag a Mate" as in *Cosmopolitan*, says the *Houston Chronicle*.

"There are 13 bridal magazines that prepare you for your wedding day but there is nothing to read five minutes after you take your wedding dress off."

Meanwhile, *Divorce* is a new French magazine that has hit 60,000 circulation after its third issue, reports *The Times of London*.

A team of editors at the GEPS publishing house came up with the idea when one of their number was close to a nervous breakdown after her divorce and complaining she couldn't find any information on the subject.